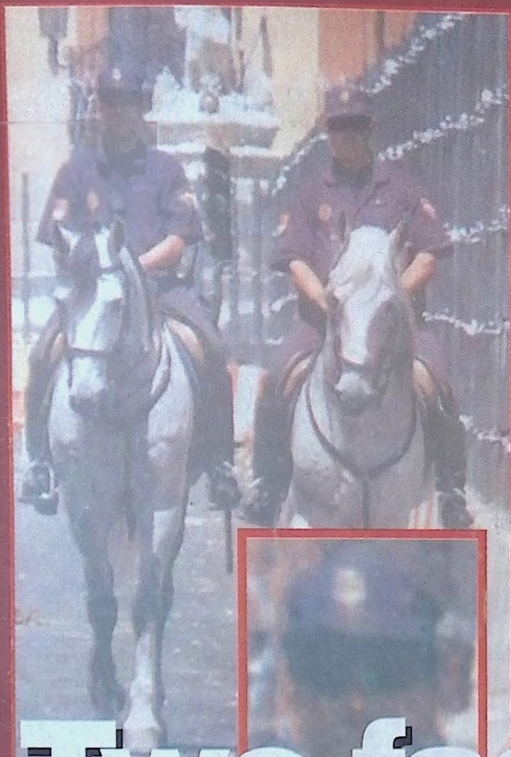


RESISTANCE

IRELANDS SOCIALIST MAGAZINE

ISSUE – 6 July/August

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Two faces of Europe

- European Social Forum
- After the Election: Where to for the Irish Left
- Northern Ireland: Breaking the cycle of sectarianism
- Special Feature on Israel and Palestine
- Arms Spending and the Global Market
- India and Pakistan: Nuclear Fall-out

NO TO THEIR EUROPE



NO TO NICE

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EDITORIAL & CONTENTS

Against a Europe of capital and war

The pressure is on as regards the Nice Treaty. The new jubilant FF/PD government is gearing up for a campaign to get the Treaty passed, preparing to go to any lengths to discredit those campaigning against it. In the first campaign the Government underestimated the degree of opposition. Presenting Nice to us a second time may just blow up in their faces. The reasons for opposing Nice are still valid. The EU's plans for a Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) and the creation of a 60,000 strong European army are elements of its overall militarisation project. Nice allows for 'cooperation in the field of armaments' and for the creation of new structures to expand its military-industrial complex. Apart from any concerns people may have about Irish soldiers being involved in the RRF, do we really want to give the green light to further military spending?

Furthermore, Article 133 of Nice calls for the 'achievement of uniformity in measures of liberalisation' and allows for negotiations between the European Commission and the World Trade Organisation. The WTO is the main mover behind the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) which aims to further deregulate all public services. Do we want more privatisation?

The enlargement proposed by the Nice Treaty is on terms favourable to the multi-nationals. The millions of people who work in Europe are not a factor in these considerations. The admission of new states from Eastern Europe is about opening up new markets and sources of labour to large corporations. There is no strategy to promote a balanced integration of the different economies and no special fund has been established to ease the transition of applicant countries from Eastern Europe.

Since the Treaty, we have seen the re-emergence of Le Pen and the landslide of the right in France. Gone is the dominance of the traditional left in France — in the autumn, Germany may go the same way. Acceptance of the Nice referendum is an endorsement of the right wing policies in Europe. Where else can we express our

opposition to the drift to the right in Europe?

Shamefully, the new Treaty is also about closing the gates of Fortress Europe. EU justice ministers want to see trade agreements with non-EU states conditional upon the repatriation of 'illegal immigrants'. Repatriation has not been a feature of Europe since the anti-semitism of the 30's in Germany. Many anti-racists across Europe want to see a dismantling of the vindictive immigration policies that deny 90 percent of asylum seekers their right to reside here. Yet the spirit of Nice is about an exclusive Europe and the centralising of power in the EU around states who advocate these tight controls — Germany, France, Italy and the UK.

Fianna Fail has opened up the debate in an aggressive manner. Ahern has had the nerve to tell those of us who oppose Nice to stop 'whingeing'. The EU, he says, is like a company looking to expand — it needs to redraft its Articles of Association. Such remarks show where this government's loyalties lie. It is so committed to Nice because it stands on the side of a corporate Europe which stands to gain so much from a closer trade bloc. *Resistance* stands with the anti-capitalists, environmentalists, socialists and anti-racists who oppose the corporate interests that are destroying people's lives. 57 million people in the EU are living below the poverty line. The EU establishment is doing nothing to tackle the needs of these people. The EU has little to offer us but unemployment, redundancies, stagnant economies and the privatisation of our services. Every time the EU leaders get together for a summit, huge numbers of people gather to tell them that their Europe is too militaristic, too profit-driven, too dismissive of the environment and unrepresentative of the people. After the general strike that coincided with the June EU summit in Seville, in which 1.5 million people took part, the Seville Social Forum called two days of protests and meetings entitled 'Against a Europe of Capital and War'. That is the message that we need to send to those who would ram the Nice Treaty down our throats.



CONTENTS

- 4 **After the election — Where now for the left?**
Richard Boyd-Barrett on the opportunities for socialists.
- 6 **Unity — A test we cannot fail**
Kieran Allen argues that sectarianism on the left must be overcome.
- 8 **The two faces of Europe**
Marnie Holborow looks at the causes behind the collapse of Social Democratic Parties in Europe.
- 10 **Seville**
A report from the events in Seville from Colm Bryce.
- 11 **The European Social Forum**
A movement finds its voice:
Grace Lally reports on the preparations for the ESF in Florence.
- 13 **France — The right wins elections but protests have a huge impact.**
Nick Barrett reports.
- 14 **Attacking the Poor — what the World Bank does best**
Sinead Kennedy examines the role of the World Bank in global capitalism.
- 18 **Breaking the cycle of sectarianism**
Goretti Horgan shows how sectarianism feeds off poverty in the North.
- 21 **Special: Israel and Palestine**
By Ryan McKinney and Brian Kelly
Israel — from victims to a watchdog state. Crisis for Arafat.
Is anti-Semitism on the rise?
- 27 **Arms spending and capitalism**
Kevin Wingfield explains how the Arms race sustained a post-war boom
- 30 **India, Pakistan and Kashmir**
Simon Basketter looks at the current dispute between the two countries.
- REGULARS**
- 17 **Open to debate**
Aine Suttle, secretary of *Galway for a Safe Environment* discusses the refuse charges and the issue of waste management in Ireland.
- 26 **Ireland Uncovered**
Rod Fitzsimons on the church cover up of the child abuse scandals.
- 31-35 **Reviews**
Shostakovich,
Feeny's *A hundred turbulent years*,
Tariq Ali's *The Clash of Fundamentalisms*,
Paul Ginsborg's *Italy and its discontents*.
- 36 **Backchat**
Eamonn McCann on Fine Gael's difficulties.

AFTER THE ELECTION:

Where now for the left?

Richard Boyd-Barrett assesses the outcome of the general election in the South.

In their years in government, Fianna Fail and the PD's have championed the neo-liberal agenda of tax cuts for the rich, the run down of public services and privatisation. The media have presented the results of the recent general election as an endorsement of these policies. The truth of the matter is substantially different.

The collapse of Fine Gael and the spectacular growth of the Greens, Sinn Fein and left Independents signal a dramatic realignment of Irish politics, with opportunities for the left. One of the major signs of the weakness of the Irish left has been that the country's politics has been dominated by two right wing parties, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. Fianna Fail traded on a more populist basis than Fine Gael, occasionally claiming that they were a left of centre party. The raft of corruption scandals that exploded since the 1980s exposed the party as a party of corruption and big business.

Working class support for FF has been declining steadily. This election was no exception. The majority of working class people either didn't vote or voted for Labour, the Greens, Sinn Fein and for Independents. Fianna Fail received less than thirty percent support among those entitled to vote. They were returned to power because there is no longer room for three parties of the rich in Ireland. The vote of the wealthy minority who have benefited from the Celtic Tiger years consolidated around the party who were the gung-ho champions of the interests of the rich.

Fine Gael weren't quite sure what they stood for. The dramatic collapse in their support represents a clearing the decks on the right of Irish politics. As one commentator astutely put it, 'the people voted to change the opposition'.

Across Europe in the 1990s disillusionment with the political establishment and the neo-liberal agenda resulted in swings to Labour or Social Democratic style parties. The experience of these parties in power has bitterly disillusioned their supporters. In Ireland this has been doubly true. The Irish Labour Party has never even pretended to be a radical party. Time and time again they have benefited from the desire of working class people for an alternative to Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. Time and time again they have squandered the opportunity, trading their every political principle for a place in government with the very parties their supporters voted against.

The experience of Labour after their record vote in 1992 confirms this. Having campaigned on a platform of 'Break the golden circle' Labour went into coalition first with Fianna Fail and then with Fine Gael. No matter what they said in the recent



Thousands of protestors confronted Ahern during the election campaign in Waterford

election campaign — Ruairi Quinn as leader said very little of interest — huge numbers of working class people simply didn't trust them.

The bankruptcy of Labour notwithstanding, Ireland, like every other country in Europe, is witnessing a growing mood of opposition to policies that favour big business. The anti-capitalist movement that exploded in countries across Europe has not expressed itself in Genoa-style protests in Ireland but the same mood exists. During the election anger on a wide range of issues was palpable. It was always going to find political expression somewhere.

The Greens and Sinn Fein were the most obvious candidates to pick up on this mood. Although small, both parties had a national profile and were seen to be untainted by corruption. Both parties spoke about the need for 'clean politics', equality, a defence of public services and the environment. Both parties were perceived to be working on the ground and were often associated with local campaigns and street politics. For people who felt that the political establishment was a million miles from their concerns Sinn Fein and the Greens seemed like a viable and radical left alternative. Joe Higgins, Socialist Party and Independents like Seamus Healy and Finian McGrath were also associated with grass roots campaigning and benefited from the mood.

Although fragmented, this overwhelmingly left vote represents the opposition to Fianna Fail. Tens of thousands of people have broken not just from the establishment but have moved to the left of Labour. There are great opportunities to create an anti-capitalist movement in this country, mirroring that developing elsewhere in Europe and across the world.

Such a movement will be badly needed. During the election Fine Gael asserted that the economy was in a mess, although nobody paid attention because it was Fine Gael saying it. Fianna Fail,

they argued, couldn't afford the promises they were making to get elected. They were correct.

The Celtic Tiger is over. The Irish boom was dependent on a massive amount of US foreign direct investment. With the end of the US boom and the dramatic contraction of the IT sector the Irish economy was always going to be particularly vulnerable. The first signs of this emerged with a raft of announcements of job losses in US multinationals. Last year saw a 48 percent increase in redundancies.

The Irish government's strategy of stealing foreign investment from the rest of Europe has run out of steam as EU candidate countries in Eastern Europe follow the same tack. The government is now admitting that tax revenues have fallen. Cuts in public spending are on the way. This is inevitable as the government renewed its commitment to spend what money it has reducing Corporation Tax to 12.5 percent by 2004.

The votes for the Greens, Sinn Fein and the left Independents are to be welcomed wholeheartedly. They represent a desire for an alternative to parties committed to the interests of the rich. The question must be asked whether these parties can deliver.

In the minds of most, the Greens are associated with the left. They played a big part in the rejection of Nice and have been associated with campaigns against racism, corruption and war. Figures like Patricia McKenna, John Gormley and Deirdre DeBurca have a good record of supporting radical issues. However, a closer look at the Greens shows that they are moving in two contradictory directions.

In Germany, the Greens, who emerged out of the movements in the late 1960s, have now joined the political establishment. Former radical Joschka Fischer is now the Foreign Minister in the SPD/Green coalition. He backed the NATO bombing of the Balkans and the recent war in Afghanistan. In government the Greens backtracked on their opposition to nuclear power and supported the ousting of Oskar Lafontaine who attempted to close a small tax loophole on big business. In France, the Greens were part of the discredited coalition with the Socialist Party. They have been overtaken in support by Trotskyist parties as people look for a genuine alternative.

Here in Ireland the same contradictions are evident. The party refused to rule out coalition with Fianna Fail before the election. Newly elected TD Ciaran Cuffe, appearing on *Questions and Answers* after the election, said that the Greens had not yet decided whether they were a left or right wing party. Cuffe, along with a number of other Green councillors, voted for bin charges and have refused to come out clearly against privatisation of services under the guise of Public Private Partnerships. On a more general level, the Greens often associate themselves with grass-roots campaigns but rarely get actively involved in building them. The party's activities are almost entirely geared towards getting elected positions.

Much the same can be said of Sinn Fein. In the South the party adopted a left stance, it called for the defence of public services and associated itself with campaigns like the Campaign Against the Bin Tax. The party has also set out consciously to build a profile in working class areas, areas treated with contempt by mainstream parties.

Closer scrutiny of Sinn Fein's politics shows that they are on the well-trodden path towards political respectability. Sinn Fein also refused to rule out coalition with Fianna Fail before the election and

their spokespeople complained when FF stated that they would not consider them as coalition partners. In Sligo, prominent SF councillor Don McManus voted for bin charges as part of a pact with FF to attain the position of Mayor. Internationally, they have been so desperate to keep onside with the Bush administration that they disowned a number of their own activists captured by the right-wing regime in Colombia. Disgracefully, Gerry Adams hobnobbed with world leaders at the World Economic Forum in New York when thousands of anti-capitalist protesters were picketing the event.

None of this is to dispute that most SF activists and voters see themselves as on the left. But clearly the leadership's ambition goes no further than getting ministerial positions and appeasing their allies in the US.

The Independents, many of whom are left wing, do not represent a coherent alternative to the government. Even if they can gain this or that concession it will need organisation and politics that go beyond localised struggles to resist the offensive that is coming from FF and the PD's.

In Ireland the potential for such organisation clearly exists. The votes for the Socialist Party, the Socialist Workers Party and the Workers Party show that the far left can emerge as a serious force. Without exception, the votes for socialists came where some real local organisation existed, based on grassroots campaigns and activity. An example of this was in the Campaign against the Bin Tax.

Given the likelihood that the Greens and Sinn Fein will not lead a consistent and active opposition to the right wing, socialists have a major responsibility to put forward a serious left alternative. The far left is hampered by a history of division. However, socialists need to take a leaf from the anti-capitalist movement and unite on what they agree on rather than focussing on what divides them. The failure of the different socialist organisations to form some sort of bloc for the General election meant that they lacked the national profile the Greens and Sinn Fein enjoyed.

Socialists should not make the same mistake in the local elections in two years time. A bloc of the SP, SWP and the WP with smaller groupings could have a real impact. But, of course, it's on the front of real struggles that a Socialist bloc is even more vital. Mass action, socialist organisation and the leadership it can offer will be necessary if we are to pose a real challenge to the establishment in this country.

A united left could offer that kind of leadership but it will require the end to petty squabbling and sniping. The Socialist Workers Party is committed to pursuing that end — we hope that others on the left will join us. The alarming resurgence of the far right across Europe is a warning of what might await if we don't pass this test. ■

Anti-Le Pen protestors in Dublin



Unity – a test we cannot fail



After the elections in the South, it is time for the far left in Ireland to unite and provide a clear socialist opposition. Kieran Allen argues that sectarianism should not be allowed to hold us back.

Ever since Bush initiated his attack on Afghanistan, an era of global permanent warfare has opened up. Bush has provided the language and justification for militarism for sub-imperialist powers such as India, Israel and Pakistan and will himself eventually initiate a new war against Iraq. The main force that is organising against this is the anti-capitalist movement. After September 11th, the media often predicted that it would decline but it has grown.

The anti-capitalist movement has produced an impressive degree of unity. Political organisations on the left that have related to this movement properly are also establishing new relations with each other. But one major obstacle to these developments in Ireland has been the persistence of sectarianism.

The term sectarianism is usually understood to refer to the hatred that has been instilled into the relations between Catholics and Protestants. However, on the left, it is used in a different sense. It refers to a style of politics that appears to see other socialist organisations as the enemy – rather than focussing on the wider development of working class politics. As the term is used loosely, let's look first at what is not sectarian.

It is not sectarian to argue in a principled fashion for your politics. In the early twentieth century the socialist movement developed a reformist wing that eventually supported the First World War. Although he was frequently decried as a 'sectarian',

Garda brutality at Reclaim the Streets brought a wide range of groups together in protest.

than focussing on the wider development of working class politics. As the term is used loosely, let's look first at what is not sectarian.

It is not sectarian to argue in a principled fashion for your politics. In the early twentieth century the socialist movement developed a reformist wing that eventually supported the First World War. Although he was frequently decried as a 'sectarian', Lenin's fight against these tendencies was vital. More generally, it is inevitable that socialists will argue. None of us have been through a socialist revolution and have come back to tell how to get there. Debate, argument and even 'disunity' are a necessary part of forging a serious socialist force.

Nor is it sectarian to take initiatives before everyone else on the left. The left can go through long periods of demoralisation, where it even lags behind elements of the working class who want to fight. Bowing to the 'common sense' of the established left can therefore be a hindrance. An example from the SWP's own history will show that. In the early nineties, the Irish left refused to challenge Youth Defence marches on the streets but the SWP took an independent initiative and was branded 'sectarian' for so doing.

Marx was the first to define the real basis of socialist sectarianism. He saw it as a tendency which subordinates real political developments in the wider working class to the needs of particular organisations, which emphasised their differences from that wider movement. Comparing the French anarchist Proudhon and the German socialist Lassalle, he said of both of them that:

'Instead of looking among genuine elements of the class movement for a real basis of this agitation, they wanted to prescribe the course to be followed by this movement according to a certain doctrinaire recipe.... The sect sees the justification for its existence and its point of honour not in what it has in common with the class movement but in the particular shibboleth which distinguishes itself from the movement.'

Marx was also extremely clear on why this tendency emerged. It arose either from a period of defeat or prior to the emergence of the working class to political maturity. A small number of socialists feel they alone were holding the movement together and so came to see new developments as a threat. Marx argued that 'The development of socialist sectarianism and that of real working class movements always stands in inverse ratio to one another.'

This analysis of sectarianism's roots is important for the Irish left. We have just come through an

election where the opposition was rejected in favour of more anti-establishment voices. The beneficiaries were Sinn Féin and the Greens, who both want to enter coalition with establishment parties in the future. It is vital that the two main parties of the far left – the Socialist Party and the SWP – come together as a socialist bloc that offers an alternative, not just at election time but in wider campaigns. Such an alliance would be far greater than the sum of its parts. This modest suggestion, however, has been consistently rejected by the Socialist Party. The stated reason for rejection of this alliance usually involves a litany of charges about the SWP's methods in this and that campaign over the past decade.

The situation in Ireland is mirrored, albeit in a much more serious way, in France. In the Presidential election two far left parties – Lutte Ouvrière (LO) and the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) – received more than 10 percent of the vote. In the assembly elections, however, their vote shrank to a mere 3 percent. There are a number of reasons why the vote shrank. But one was that the LO refused to reach even a minimal agreement with the LCR about dividing the constituencies between them. The far left was thus split, while more reformist elements of the left used the rise of Le Pen to scare people back into voting for them.

How can one account for such incredible sectarianism – either from Lutte Ouvrière or the Socialist Party in Ireland? Here you have to look at a particular approach to politics that developed within orthodox Trotskyism. Trotsky's defence of the Russian revolution and his arguments about fascism make him an outstanding revolutionary. But the same cannot be said for many of his followers who developed a sect-like mentality towards his ideas. Everything that Trotsky wrote was deemed to be true, even if this meant defending every word while discarding his revolutionary methods.

In the case of the SP and Lutte Ouvrière this meant defending the view that Russia was a 'deformed workers state' – even if workers had little control over their industries. The mere fact that industry was nationalised and that the state maintained a monopoly over foreign trade was enough to claim that the 'social gains' of the 1917 revolution had not been uprooted. When the Socialist Workers Party broke from this view and argued that Russia was a state capitalist regime, this was denounced as a betrayal of Trotsky's legacy.

However, another element of this tradition has an important bearing on today, namely an incorrect conception about the relationship between the revolutionary party and the mass of workers. In 1938 Trotsky developed a 'transitional programme', which involved a series of demands. He argued that if they were taken up by the working class they would lead to a fundamental challenge to the system. The Trotskyist movement at the time was cut off from the majority of workers and had little impact. But the notion that a small party could develop a 'transitional' programme in relative isolation from workers and subsequently hand it down to the masses who would arise and follow them became an important part of the orthodox Trotskyist tradition.

The notion that there are demands that can be taken from a programme written in 1938 and then foisted on a living, new movement is absurd. It fails to recognise that demands such as the fight for 'land, bread and peace', which in one context may seem meekly mild can be the stuff of revolution, as they were in Russia in 1917.

More crucially, this approach to politics sets up the political party as the 'teacher of the masses'. It fails to see any dialectical relationship between a revolutionary organisation that argues for its ideas within the working class and also learns from working class struggle. It leads its adherents to see other left organisations as obstacles getting in the way of the masses seeing the wisdom of THE programme



Workers instinctively look for unity to defend their common interests

Hence the sometimes virulent hatreds promoted against other serious rivals on the left.

One other consequence of this emphasis on the programme is that genuine united fronts become extremely difficult. Unity in struggle is vital to creating conditions whereby working class people can be politicised in large numbers. Such a unity typically involves revolutionaries working alongside reformists for limited demands. In the course of such struggles, different policies become clear and it often becomes possible for revolutionaries to deepen their influence.

However, if one assumes that the party has the transitional programme and that other political influences are an obstacle to the masses seeing this programme, it follows that unity in action with reformist forces is extremely difficult. So the SP criticises the SWP for having Labour Party speakers on platforms while Lutte Ouvrière goes one step further and refused even to call for a vote for reformist candidates when they are standing against fascists! Sectarianism can bring short-term benefits for particular organisations. In the case of the Socialist Party, it was a way of 'hardening up' their organisation after a major crisis developed within their international network after their Scottish organisation broke away to form the very successful Scottish Socialist Party.

It can also give a veneer of revolutionary purism while the actual practice can be quite passive. The SP's main perspective over the past year was to get Clare Daly elected and virtually everything else was subordinated to this. Little attempt was made to build an anti-war movement and only a tokenistic campaign was mounted during the abortion campaign. The broader, more political issues were relegated to the actions of their youth wing. All these contradictions were covered with the claim to uphold the purity of the transitional programme.

The problem, however, is that this approach to politics now clashes with the clear need to offer a left-wing alternative to workers after the election. If opposition to this government is left in the hands of the nationalist forces of Sinn Féin, it will go nowhere. It is vital that a serious socialist bloc is constructed. There can and will be differences within this bloc. But it's time to set aside the infantile sectarianism and let the far left in Ireland grow up.

The two faces of Europe

The swing to the right across Europe, most recently shown by the landslide for Chirac in France, has taken many by surprise. It has arisen, Marnie Holborow argues, because the European Labour Parties have failed — but this has also opened up a political space for the left.



When Progressive Democrat Michael McDowell, jubilant from his appointment as Justice Minister, sat down with EU Justice Ministers in June he was greeted with his own kind — neoliberals and born-again Thatcherites.

The EU, once almost synonymous with Social Democracy, now has governments of the right. In the past few years voters in Spain, Portugal, The Netherlands and France have turfed out the Social Democrats and put in right wing governments. In Austria in 1999 the Conservative People's Party and the farright Freedom Party formed a coalition government. In 2001 the Italian coalition of Forza Italia, the fascist National Alliance and the Northern League took power. A similar grouping won power in Norway.

We can expect to see new offensives from these new right-wing governments: further privatisation, attacks on workers rights and a more overtly racist clampdown on asylum seekers. Some of this has already come to the fore. The meeting of EU Justice ministers agreed to a number of measures to stop immigrants getting into Europe. For all the talk of "generous enlargement" from our Government during the last Nice referendum, Cowen and McDowell have been quick to go along with fortress Europe. They agree that stemming illegal immigration is a major concern for Europe.

Significantly, this meeting took place in the same week that saw Denmark's immigration minister Bertel Haarder introduce the toughest immigration law in Europe. It slashes welfare benefits for asylum seekers by 50 percent, extends the waiting time for permanent residence to seven years, bars asylum seekers from marrying, denies them rights to attend family reunions and forbids anyone under 24 from entering Denmark with a spouse from outside the EU. Such a racist law is a stark indication of what right wing governments across Europe will be like.

However, the swing to the right in governments is not the only political trend existing in Europe. Increasingly there is no great faith in the possibility of political change coming through elections. In France the abstention rate in the second round of the elections for the Legislature was 40 percent. Right across Europe voter participation rates have fallen.

Spain's Aznar and Italy's Berlusconi are leading the right-wing crusade in Europe

Furthermore, while right wing governments have won in the ballot boxes, countries across Europe have also seen the rebirth of massive mobilisations on the streets. Thirteen million people went on strike in Italy in April in response to Berlusconi's attempt to dismantle Italian Labour Laws. It was the first general strike in the country for twenty years and it attracted record levels of support — around 90 percent of workers, according to the unions. In France, after Le Pen's 16 percent vote in the first round of the presidential elections, massive anti-fascist mobilisations erupted on to the streets. The Paris demonstration on the Monday after the first round of elections involved over 100,000 people. In the elections to the legislature Le Pen did not succeed in getting one deputy elected. On top of all these separate struggles, the growing anti-capitalist demonstrations have come to symbolise by their size, unity and militancy the massive gap between government and people. Seville was no different. Massive numbers, instantly finding an echo with the local labour movement strengthened opposition to Aznar's government. Across Europe the move to the right is strengthening a new militant opposition. It is the centre, in the form of Social Democracy that has fallen away. How has this come about?

People in Europe are suffering under stagnant economies with persistent unemployment. Growth rates in the first quarter of 2002 were around zero percent in the Euro-area. Unemployment remains high across Europe. Against this backdrop, the Europe-wide attacks on public services leaves many EU workers distrustful of their governments.

French journalist, Laurent Joffrin, writing about the legacy of the Socialist Government in France, has captured some of the depth of this disillusionment. He describes how the political class is completely removed from ordinary people. The careerists of the French Socialist Party govern from a media bubble, rarely venturing beyond the Left Bank and their country houses. What Joffrin writes about French Social Democracy rings true for New Labour or indeed, Ruairi Quinn's party in Ireland.

The reformist left's political arrogance and their long history of corruption plays into the hands of the far right and fascists. List Pim Fortuyn in Holland was able to pick up votes because people were sickened with the corruption of the Dutch Labour party. It was not surprising that in France some working class areas fell for the message peddled by the Front National because the Socialist Party seemed miles away from their poor neighbourhoods. However, not all the disgust with the Socialist Party helped the racists. In areas of North Paris where unemployment, run down services and crumbling houses make living difficult, many voted for a young postal worker, Besancenot, who stood for Ligue Communiste Revolutionaire.

The European Labour Parties have also dropped the defence of the state sector and public services. Their adoption of the so-called 'Third Way' was about accommodating the neoliberal agenda of privatisation. They could not embrace the market fast enough. In 1998, with Labour Parties in power in 13 EU countries they clamoured for countries to deregulate and privatise. Jospin privatised more than the two previous right wing governments in France. At the EU summit in Barcelona before the elections in France, Chirac and Jospin agreed to the privatisation of the state-owned Electricity de France, to the raising of the retirement age and to the reduction of public sector spending. The SPD in Germany, confronted with the slowest growth rates in Europe and with unemployment at 4 million, has retreated further from traditional state intervention. Rather than increasing state investment in much needed areas, Schroeder has sought to extend schemes to create low-paid jobs. He has cut income taxes already and has promised further reductions. Where before, the government stepped in to save companies going bankrupt, now, in the case of the vast construction company Holzmann, Schroeder stands by and lets the market take its course, no matter what the human cost. The Labour Parties in Europe have paved the way for the right; their policies have failed the people who looked to them.

They have paved the way for the right in another sense. They have shed the ideology, even the rhetoric, which distinguished them from Tory parties. They have championed so many reactionary policies that they have become indistinguishable from the right. Blair and even the more left wing, Jospin, "talked tough" on many areas that were traditionally the preserve of the right — from law and order to immigration. Social Democracy now has a blurred ideology. As a result people no longer see the need to vote for it. For these reasons, the German SPD may just be the next casualty for Social Democracy. In the German state elections in Saxony-Anhalt the SPD vote dropped by 16 points to just 20 percent.

The flaws of Social Democracy are not new. The history of the Social Democratic tradition has always preferred to adapt to existing power structures rather than overturn them — no doubt why Lenin described reformists as Plan B for the employer class. However the disillusionment with Social Democracy this time coincides with a changing political face of Europe. This is not without relevance for us in Ireland as we face into another Nice referendum.

Some held that European capitalism was more humane than the US, red in tooth and claw, variant. A recent book by Observer Columnist Will Hutton argues (with somewhat poor timing) that Europe's core values are equality and social solidarity — that it can act as a bulwark against the new conservative order of American capitalism. Even today

the Irish Trade Union leaders — all pro-Nice — echo this faith in Europe. Such beliefs arose from the strong presence of social democracy across Europe and the hope that some of that reformism could be parachuted in here. It was wrong then and even more now. Right wing governments could now make Berlin look very much like Boston. The traditional left have always had a blind spot about the racist and imperialist dimension of Europe and talk only about its civilisation and socially minded laws. For all its talk about equality and solidarity Hutton's book makes no mention of the anti-asylum laws that the EU is coordinating. Furthermore the EU and its commission are increasingly resembling US free marketeers. Liberalising of trade, privatisation of state run companies, reining in public spending — all these are features of the new Europe.

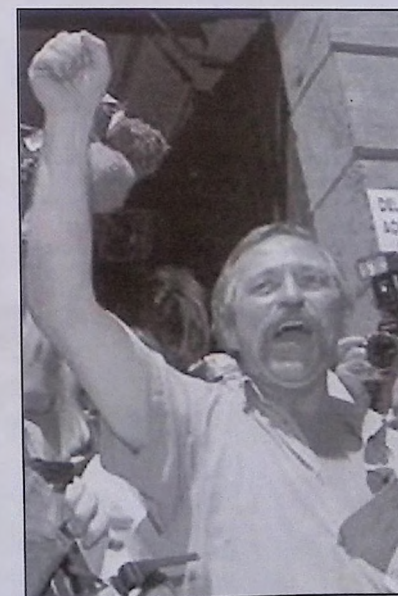
Even when Europe seemed more progressive in social matters, it was less to do with the presence of Social Democracy than the outcome of massive struggles from the sixties and seventies. The protective labour law that Berlusconi attacked in Italy was won by workers' struggles and granted as a result of this pressure. Laws on women's equality arose from many more women working and taking up the fight for women's rights. It is the struggles and protests of working people not the structures of the EU that will defend workers' rights.

There have always been two Europes — that of the rulers who sought to extend their wealth, and the Europe of those who laboured under their power. The ordinary people of Europe were the front line victims in their rulers' imperialist wars. At certain times in the last century, in the 1914-18 war, in the thirties, again in the sixties, the workers of Europe stood up against their rulers and challenged the system that has been imposed on them. Often it was war or the threat of it that mobilised the opposition and socialists who were the prime movers of the movement from below.

Today we see the Europe of big business and the Europe of millions of workers for whom global capitalism has made their lives worse. Against the backdrop of a more militarised world in which the European powers rush to play their part, the EU seeks to protect the interests of capital in a tighter-knit Europe. The Irish government, when speaking of Europe, are speaking on behalf of the Europe of capital not labour. These are the interests they are trying to foist upon us with the Nice Treaty. It must be rejected.

The weakening of a reformist centre is dangerous in so far as the right can capitalise on the vacuum and grow. It also presents an opportunity for real socialists. Already the anti-capitalist movement has been a focus for those disillusioned with both the system and the politicians. This movement has been strengthened from Genoa to Seville as 'official politics' have moved to the right. It needs to become more organised, to reach deeper into factories and offices. It needs to set off a real challenge to the new right wing policies of the EU and offer an alternative to the compromises and betrayals of the reformist left. ■

Many people disillusioned with the mainstream left are looking to figures like Jose Bove in the anti-capitalist movement.



Otro mundo viene

(Another world is coming)

Calm Bryce was in Seville during the general strike and the demonstrations at the EU Summit.

The general strike and mass protests against the EU Summit in Seville represent another major watershed for the global anti-capitalist movement. The huge demonstration of 500,000 in Barcelona in March forced the Spanish trade union leaders to take action. These leaders, as cautious and timid as any in Europe, called a general strike under pressure from their members. Seville showed that the spirit of anti-capitalism is fuelling a new confidence in the working class movement.

The Spanish trade unions deliberately timed the general strike to cause maximum embarrassment to Prime Minister Aznar at the opening of the EU Summit. Aznar, leader of the Conservative People's Party, has been forcing through a series of attacks on unemployment benefits. The trade unions in Spain have a relatively small membership, of between 12 and 15 percent of the whole workforce. But the strike acted as a rallying point for the massive discontent that exists in Spain, due to casual employment, privatisation and low pay. Aznar's popularity has evaporated as the Spanish 'economic miracle', which lasted for eight years, turned into a recession.

Every town and city was covered in posters and graffiti for the 'Huelga General' (General strike) and on 20 June virtually the whole of Spain came to a standstill. More than 3 million people took part in the trade union demonstrations, 500,000 in Madrid, more than 600,000 in Barcelona, 100,000 in Seville, Vigo and countless other cities, with even 15,000 marching on the Canary Islands. The strike was completely solid among factory and other industrial workers. Hundreds of thousands of casual agricultural day labourers stopped work, as did virtually all public sector workers.

Aznar demanded that 20 percent of transport services be maintained during the strikes. But from the early morning mass pickets closed all the bus and rail stations, before moving on to close bars and restaurants. Across Seville, shops and bars had stickers on their doors saying 'Closed for the general strike — signed, the workers'. Nurses mounted lively pickets outside the hospitals.

The trade union march in Seville was infected with the spirit of anti-capitalism. In sharp contrast to previous trade union rallies, which one Spanish activist described as being like funeral marches, thousands of young people took part and anti-capitalist chants were readily taken up by the crowd. At

the rally, the trade union leaders spoke in a very radical tone. The leader of the European Confederation of Trade Unions talked of calling a European-wide general strike in the autumn against the continuing attacks on workers' rights.

The other protests in Seville also showed how the anti-capitalist movement has moved on in the last year. The three themes of the Seville Social Forum meetings were: 'Otro mundo es posible' (Another world is possible), 'Contra la Europa del capital y de la Guerra' (Against a Europe of Capital and War) and 'Globalicemos las resistencias' (Globalise the Resistance). A counter-conference took place in Seville taking up the questions of global debt, the environment, solidarity with Palestine, immigration, how to defeat the far right, to opposing imperialism and militarism. Around 300 refugees staged an occupation and hunger strike in a campus of Seville University to demand legal recognition leading up to the summit.

The debates showed the diversity of the movement. The 'war on terrorism' and Palestine were particular sources of controversy, with different groups feeling the need to express equal condemnation of Israeli or US terror and suicide bombings. There was great interest in the speakers from the International Socialist Tendency from Britain and Greece, who spoke of the need to take a clear position on opposition to US imperialism and Zionism.

The high point of the protests was the march on Saturday evening, which was anything from 100,000 to 200,000-strong. The march was overwhelmingly Spanish, given the difficulty of getting to Seville. Again the trade union presence was far greater than in Genoa. Banners declared 'No-one is illegal', there were plenty of Palestinian flags and 'otro mundo es posible' was featured on virtually every placard. The demonstration took over three hours to travel the five kilometres of the route and was cheered all along the way by local residents.

The mobilisations were not built by a single organisation, rather tens of thousands responded to the calls by often small organisations, coming together in a coalition like the Seville Social Forum. This coalition provided a forum for a new layer of activists to break through some of the demoralisation and division that affected sections of the old left. This model, stressing unity towards a common purpose, is one which has been shown to work. It is hopefully the shape of things to come.

THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FORUM

The alternative to Nice

Anti-capitalists in Europe are coming together to discuss how the movement can be taken further. Grace Lally from Globalise Resistance reports.

According to establishment politicians and media pundits the future of Europe is in the hands of the people of Ireland. The ratification of the Nice Treaty is the key to modernising the EU and extending the benefits of the EU to the people of Eastern Europe. Of course the fact that people saw through this nonsense once before and voted down the Nice Treaty has not deterred them. However, this Autumn we will get an opportunity to shape the future of Europe by voting no to Nice again, in larger and more determined numbers, and by mobilising as widely as possible for the European Social Forum in Florence.

The Nice Treaty represents everything that is wrong with the EU, while the European Social Forum (ESF) represents the potential for a very different Europe. Nice proposes to bring Eastern European countries into the EU as second class states, to be opened up for the vulture capitalists of the West. Nice plans to militarise Europe and to extend the neo-liberal agenda. On the other hand the ESF is leading the way in building real grassroots solidarity and co-operation between the people of Europe, east and west, in the fight for people and planet.

September 11th was proclaimed as the end of the anti-capitalist movement. We were all supposed to drop our criticisms of capitalism to defend it against the real enemy — terrorism. Far from falling for this argument, in many countries the response was the exact opposite. People began to develop their critique of economic globalisation — they began to oppose the imperialist war machine that accompanies it. A major part in the growth of the movement has been the emergence of social forums at a local, national and international level.

The European Social Forum, which will take place in Florence from the 7th to the 10th of November, was proposed at the second World Social Forum (WSF) held in Porto Alegre last February. There, some 70,000 activists from across the world came together in opposition to a world dominated by neo-liberal economics and war. Most importantly, they met to learn from each other and to develop their ideas and strategies for a different world.

The organisers are proposing that the ESF be 'a common public space for discussion, debate and mutual influence' among all those who accept the 'Call of the Social Movements' adopted at Porto Alegre. The 'Call of the Social Movements' is an attempt at a mission statement for the anti-capitalist movement, outlining the common principles that everyone shares — opposition to war, neo-liberalism and a commitment to building a truly equal, just and democratic world.

Representatives of groups from all over Europe have met twice so far — in Brussels and Vienna — to discuss the agenda for the forum. The Vienna meeting was held specifically to encourage participation from people of the former USSR states.

The next meeting will be in Greece, with the aim of involving more groups from the Balkans, Turkey and North Africa.

So far it has been agreed that the meetings in Florence will concentrate on three main themes: neo-liberalism and globalisation; war and militarism; democracy and citizenship.

Importantly, the forum will not just be a talking shop to agree on what we are all against, which is after all the easiest thing to do. The organisers are keen to encourage fraternal debate, to draw out points of disagreement and to seek alternative viewpoints. This will make it a much more constructive forum for people to learn and discuss concrete strategies for building the movement.

In the build up to the ESF there has been some debate about the role of political parties. Some of this discussion stems from a level of uneasiness about the experience of the World Social Forum where political parties like the PT (Workers Party) in Brazil were quite prominent in pushing their electoral programme. Opportunist politicians from parties like Jospin's socialist party also attended the WSF to gain electoral credibility with left wing movements in France.

Although there is an attempt by reformist parties to co-opt the movement and pull it to the right, the reality is that political parties, particularly parties like Rifondazione Comunista in Italy, are an integral part of the movement and it would be farcical to exclude them. We should recognise that even in right-wing social democratic parties many ordinary members are a vital part of the movement. As socialists we also believe that we need to build alternative left-wing parties — revolutionary parties — with clear political strategies and organisation that can bring the movement forward.

The movement needs to develop the same clarity and determination as the rich have shown in their pursuit of profit and power. The bosses have their own political parties and even have their own ESF — the European Services Forum. The European Services Forum represents the interests of the most powerful companies in 20 service sectors. These sectors include banking, the postal service, retail, water and energy. It was set up by British Tory Sir Leon Brittan when he was vice-president of the European Commission. This group operates within the EU to encourage the implementation of GATS, the General Agreement on Trade in Services, which is a World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreement aimed at privatising every service — both in the developing and the developed world.

The European Commission promotes the GATS agreement as being 'first and foremost an instrument for the benefit of business'. GATS has also been described as the structural adjustment programme for the West. But it is not some nasty bankers from outside who are enforcing the cuts and privatisation plans in the GATS agreement on us, rather 'our' governments are pushing these plans through the EU because their loyalty is to the interests of 'our' business community. Across Europe, living standards and public services have come under attack while multinational corporations have consolidated their wealth and power.

NINGUNA PERSONA ES ILEGAL
FORO SOCIAL DE SEVILLA

For many in the mid-nineties the alternative appeared to be voting for left-wing parties who could defend the 'old labour values' that provided a safety net from the worst excesses of the market. But in country after country the 'left' have proved themselves as business friendly as their right wing competitors. The fact that far-right parties across Europe have been able to grow off the back of people's disillusionment with the failure of the left makes the task of building a real left alternative to the system all the more urgent. The European Social Forum is undoubtedly part of that process.

The anti-capitalist movement has already begun to re-invigorate the confidence of working people to stand up to the bosses. This process has started to happen most dramatically in Italy. Before the 300,000 strong march in Genoa against the G8 last July many on the Italian left were almost paralysed with fear at the prospect of Berlusconi returning to power. They had seen the left in power implementing all the same stringent policies traditionally associated with the right and they had seen Berlusconi's triumphant election victory.

Fearful of the far right but with no great enthusiasm for the sell-outs and betrayals of the centre left alternative, there seemed to be little else on offer. Genoa changed all that. People's hatred for Berlusconi and his corrupt government was given a concrete focus when the police violently attacked demonstrators and gunned down Carlo Giuliani in cold blood.

On a demonstration where the most optimistic forecaster predicted 100,000 marchers, 300,000 people streamed into the city to show their outrage. In the following days and weeks tens of thousands more came onto the streets of cities all over Italy against police brutality. Berlusconi's powerful state machine went full speed into retreat — everyone arrested in Genoa was freed without charge and heads rolled in the police force to stave off more dramatic consequences for the government. The whole thing injected a new confidence into Italian workers — they found a political alternative to the status-quo on the streets.

In the three million strong demonstration called by the CGIL union federation in Rome on 23 March and the general strike on 16 April, the new social movements played an important role. The unions called the strike to defend existing laws that stop the bosses from sacking workers arbitrarily. The social movements tried to extend the fight of the unions to a fight for new rights and more protection for workers. They helped to extend the strike to non-unionised workplaces and encouraged non-union workers in illegal and temporary work to stand up to the bosses by blockading their companies from outside.

The same radicalising impact of the anti-capitalist movement within the working class was in evidence in Spain in June, when 84% of Spanish workers joined a general strike the day before the EU summit in Seville.

As the world becomes more globalised the need to challenge it on a global level becomes a necessity. The European Social Forum is a building block to a bigger and more inclusive World Social Forum in 2003. Here is an opportunity for activists in Ireland to link together their struggles with those of activists across Europe. It is an opportunity to link up the developing anti-capitalist movement in Ireland with the workers in the labour movement fighting privatisation and cuts.

Building a large Irish contingent to the ESF will not just make those struggles part of the international movement, it will provide an unmissable

opportunity to share experiences and to strengthen our fights here.

The anti-capitalist movement provides the best hope for making 'Another World' possible. As Vittorio Agnoletto, chair of the Genoa Social Forum put it, 'today the alternative is not between neo-liberalism, the WTO and old-style Communism. The real alternative is between the World Bank and the peoples of Porto Alegre'.

The spirit of Porto Alegre will be in Florence in November. ■

European Social Forum 7th-10th November Florence, Italy

Join Globalise Resistance in
mobilising for the ESF from
Ireland

contact Grace at 086 4098186
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<http://globaliseresistance.cjb.net>

The Genoa
Social Forum
led a march of
300,000 people
against the G8
in July 2001



Right in power in France but protests and strikes continue

Nick Barrett
writes from Paris
after the
elections

After the shock of the first round of the French presidential elections in April, and the massive demonstrations against Le Pen on May 5th, the French Tories won a landslide victory in the elections for the National Parliament.

The right won two thirds of the 577 seat National Assembly. Jean-Marie Le Pen's fascists in the Front Nationale and their allies around Bruno Megret suffered a notable defeat, they got 12 percent of the vote, 7 points down compared to the presidential elections, and 3 percent less than their score in the previous general elections in 1997.

On the left, the Socialist party maintained its vote but its Green and Communist Party allies only managed to get a few percent. The far-left scored 3 percent nationally, well behind the amazing 10 percent in April.

The dominant theory in the media is that of the alternance, 'now it's the turn of the right to govern'. But this way of presenting things hides the underlying dynamic which was so evident in the presidential elections.

First of all the abstention rate has attained record levels for France — it was a whopping 40 percent in the second round of the Legislative election. Nearly sixteen million people didn't bother to vote, amazing given the supposed "lesson" of the presidential elections which saw Le Pen getting through to the second round.

If we look more closely at those who abstained, over half are young (under 35) and 45 percent are manual workers. Counting the abstentionists, the far left and the FN vote together, over half of the total electorate did not vote for a party likely to be part of a new government. This is a huge crisis for French democracy.

The left reacted pitifully to their defeat. Until now the Socialist Party and its allies have made no serious assessment of their five-year record of free market policies. It does not occur to them that this is the main reason for their defeat. On election night the socialist leaders started calling for an immediate rise in the minimum wage, which sounded like hypocrisy to millions of workers who had waited for them to do that whilst in government. Then they started bleating about the irresponsibility of the people who did not vote — "Where did that Republican fervour of Mayday go to?"

It is becoming clear that the huge demonstrations at the end of April were not an expression of loyal

French citizenship. Quite simply, they were mass demonstrations against fascism. Millions of ordinary French people think that the French Republic belongs to politicians and big business.

The Tories' victory is bad news: they are looking to launch a new offensive. As the results came in, employment minister, François Fillon, spoke of changing the law on the 35-hour week to 'allow' people to work more overtime. Given the miserable level of the minimum wage, workers certainly need extra money but it is doubtful that longer working hours make up a pressing working class demand. The right's programme is a carbon copy of the employers' demands: pension funds, a longer working week, making healthcare more expensive and pushing back the retirement age.

They also want to reopen children's prisons, strengthen police powers and close down the Sangatte refugee centre near Calais. They also waited until they had won the election to notify anti-capitalist farmer Jose Bove that he must serve a three-month sentence for destroying a McDonalds outlet.

One part of the French ruling class has learnt a lesson from the huge public sector strikes in 1995. They want to avoid a frontal clash with workers. This is why their first attack is not going to be on pensions and the right to retire, but on the right to all-out strikes in the public sector. The government want to impose a 'minimum service' that cannot be endangered by strikes in the railways and other services.

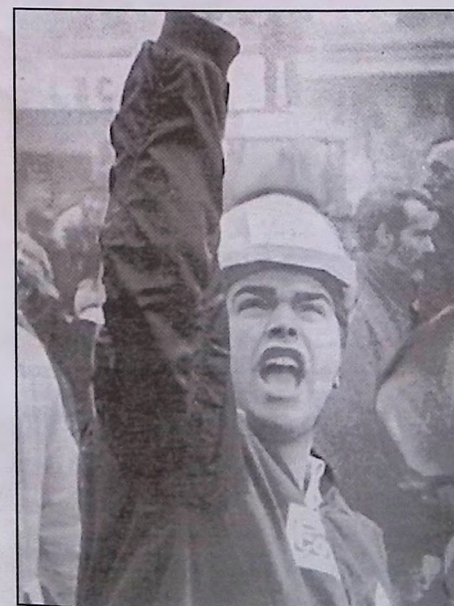
The national gas service is scheduled for privatisation in 2004. However, the government will not have it all its own way. The huge cynicism amongst working class people regarding mainstream politics means that even the slightest event could spark off massive protests. Recently, a transport strike grounded the buses in Nancy and air traffic controllers have gone on strike.

For the moment, the right's victory is confined to the electoral rather than the economic arena. If at least a part of the left challenges the government then all the potential displayed by the anti-capitalist movement, as expressed by the 3 million people who voted for the far left in the presidential elections could become a real force.

This is where the French revolutionary left has such a vital role to play. Lutte Ouvrière stupidly refused an electoral alliance proposed by the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR) for these elections, preferring to stand alone. The LCR has thousands of people interested in joining since the presidential elections, and launched a public appeal for the building of an anti-capitalist left, starting with forums around the country in the autumn. At the same time it has started talking about a fightback over public services.

This is exactly what is needed. The traditional left will not do it. The anti-capitalist movement is waiting for and needs just such an initiative to build unity. The pole of attraction for present and future revolutionaries in France, and the key to building a big anti-capitalist left is clearly the LCR.

A young french
worker on strike



ATTACKING THE POOR

What the World Bank does best

Despite its claim to tackle poverty, the World Bank sets up a system of indebtedness that forces governments to further impoverish their own people. Sinead Kennedy looks at how this institution works and asks whether it can be reformed.

A recent report produced by the World Bank is at pains to point out that the neo-liberal policies pushed by the IMF and the WTO is good for the Third World. Apparently, these policies are all about getting a fair deal for the impoverished countries.

Examine the World Bank website and you are greeted with pictures of smiling African women and children. 'Our dream is a world free of poverty', it proudly proclaims. 'We at the Bank have made it our mission to fight poverty with passion and professionalism, putting it at the centre of all work we do. The 4.8 billion people who are our ultimate clients deserve nothing less', explains President James Wolfensohn.

The emergence of the anti-capitalist movement has cast the World Bank onto centre stage, holding its policies open to scrutiny for the first time. Its comments are an attempt to recast itself as a protector of the poor, rather than a club for the rich.

What is the World Bank and how does it operate?

The World Bank lends around US\$25 bn. a year to developing countries. It comprises of 183 member countries and is based in Washington DC. Both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are often referred to as the Bretton Woods Institutions. The forerunner to the World Bank, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) was formally established

between 1945 and 1946 and made its first loan in 1947. Its original aim was to provide funds to help the European powers rebuild their post-war economies, but by 1948 it had begun lending to the Southern hemisphere countries for economic development.

After the Second World War the World Bank and the IMF were intended to establish a post-war economic order based on the notion of cooperation in the realm of trade and economic relations. It was hoped that these institutions would overcome the destabilising effects of the global economic depression of the 1930's.

The idea was that the IMF would create a stable climate for international trade by harmonising its members' monetary policies and by maintaining exchange rate stability for currencies. It would be able to provide temporary financial assistance to countries encountering economic difficulties. The World Bank, on the other hand, would serve to improve the capacity of countries to trade by lending money to war-ravaged and impoverished countries for reconstruction and development projects.

Since its inception the IBRD has loaned or committed over \$400 billion in more than 4000 loans. IBRD loans operate on the basis of a five year grace period where no repayments are required, governments then have between 15 and 20 years to pay back their debts at market interest rates, averaging 6.5 percent. The Bank never reschedules or cancels a loan. Because it has enormous power internationally and can bankrupt a country at the stroke of a pen, governments put meeting the Bank's schedules at the top of their list of priorities — often ahead of health or education spending.

The most industrialised countries, the G7, dominate the World Bank and IMF governance structures because they represent the largest donors. There is little consultation with poorer nations. The US government holds 20 percent of the vote in the institutions and is represented by a single Executive Director. The 47 sub-Saharan

African countries, in contrast, have two Executive Directors and hold only 7 percent of votes between them.

Originally loans were supposed to be given only to 'specific projects' — infrastructural projects, such as the construction of roads, dams or social welfare projects, such as those in the health and education sector. But by 1980, the Bank introduced Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPS) to provide financing to countries experiencing balance of payments problems.

These loans are provided to countries for social, structural and sectoral reforms, including the development of national financial and judicial institutions. The World Bank, in close co-operation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) attaches strict conditions to its loans with the stated aims of ensuring the country's economy is structured towards loan repayments.

These conditions focus on the liberalisation of trade and investment, as well as the deregulation and privatisation of nationalised industries. It is this neo-liberal agenda that underlies all the so-called programmes for 'economic reform' pushed by politicians and mainstream economists.

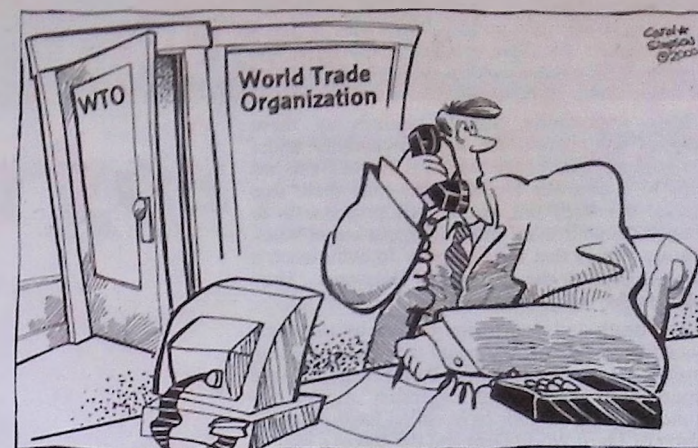
The central logic of the World Bank is to deny the poor any alternative to its policies and to create a reserve army of labour, subject to the whims of capitalism across the world. Its 1995 report *Workers in an Integrating World* sets out the manner in which the untrammelled exploitation of workers by capital can take place. It argues against a minimum wage in middle/low income economies with large agricultural or informal sectors. It states that health and safety legislation should be subject to market principles and that cost and trade sanctions should never be used to enforce workers' rights.

These policies, combined with the attached conditions, have resulted in the loss of a State's authority to govern its own economy. National economic policies, predetermined under the SAPS, involve cuts in basic health, education and social services.

Take the country of Malawi for example. Malawi is one of poorest nations in Africa and is highly indebted to the World Bank. After four months of hunger and starvation the Malawi government declared a state of disaster in March 2002, as its people experienced the worst maize shortage since 1949. With a depleted and weakened workforce and cultivation methods reliant on heavy physical labour, many predict at least three years of famine. The famine is being compounded by World Bank guided food policies.

The Bank has been encouraging Malawi's government to export their produce to keep foreign exchange rates stable — rather than storing grain. The pressure to service an outstanding bank loan prompted Malawi to sell 28,000 tonnes of stored maize to Kenya, just three months before the food crisis hit. President Bakili Muluzi confirmed that the IMF and the World insisted that Malawi sell the maize to repay commercial banks.

Many infrastructural projects financed and favoured by the World Bank Group also have social and environmental implications for the populations in the affected areas. For example, World Bank-funded construction of hydroelectric dams in countries like India and Uganda has resulted in the displacement of the indigenous peoples of the area. The Bank has also invested US\$ 3.7 billion in the Chad Cameroon Oil and Pipeline Project. The money will be used to support one of the



"We know a number of international companies who are hiring. Can you pass for under 12?"

largest private sector investments on the African continent; the development of 300 oil wells in Chad and the construction of a 1070 km pipeline to the Atlantic coast of Cameroon. However there is compelling evidence that not only will the pipeline devastate the natural environment of this region, it will destroy the lives of thousands of indigenous people.

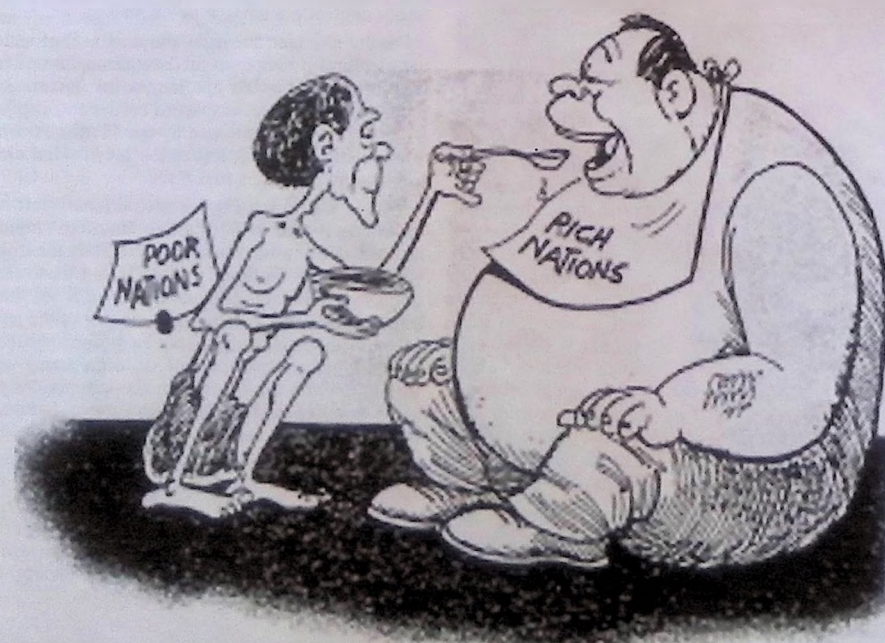
Even those who work within the World Bank's structures have spoken out about the devastation that its policies have created. In an interview with Greg Palast, the former Chief Economist of the World Bank, Joseph Stiglitz, described how the World Bank operates. The first step in the institutions' intervention in an economy is privatisation — or, as Stiglitz terms it, 'Briberization'. Governments sell off electricity and water companies using the demands of the World Bank as an excuse.

Step two is what is termed 'Capital Market Liberalisation'. Stiglitz states: 'In theory, capital market liberalisation allows investment capital to flow in and out. Unfortunately, as in Indonesia and Brazil, the money simply flowed out and out'. Cash comes in for speculation in real estate and currency, and then flees at the first whiff of trouble. A nation's reserves can drain in days or hours. When that happens, to seduce speculators into returning a nation's own capital funds, the IMF demands that these nations raise interest rates to 30 percent, 50 percent even 80 percent.

Then the IMF drags the struggling country to Step three, which is known as 'Market-Base Pricing'. In practice this means that prices on basic essentials such as food, water and cooking gas are all rapidly increased. An example of this occurred when the IMF eliminated food and fuel subsidies for the poor in Indonesia in 1998.

The IMF and the World Bank are not always strict adherents to neo-liberal economics. When the IMF stopped the subsidising of food in Indonesia it also put together billions of dollars to save Indonesian financiers and the Western banks. So market intervention is at times welcomed by them, especially if it protects the profits of the rich.

The final step of the IMF and World Bank's 'poverty reduction strategy' is 'Free Trade'. This is free trade by the rules of the WTO and World Bank, that Stiglitz likens to the West's actions in the 19th century Opium Wars. 'That too was about



opening markets,' Stiglitz said. 'In the Opium Wars the West used military blockades to force open markets for their unbalanced trade. Today, the World Bank can order a similarly deadly and effective financial blockade'.

Most importantly, Stiglitz reminds us, these policies don't work. Africa's productivity under the guiding hand of the IMF and World Bank has sunk to ever-lower levels. Every time these free market solutions fail, the Bank's response is to simply demand even more free market policies. Stiglitz argues that the only way to avoid such a fate is to follow the example of Botswana. 'They told the IMF to go packing'.

The death and destruction caused by organisations like the World Bank and the WTO has been thrown onto the centre of the World Stage with the emergence of the anti-capitalist movement. Hundreds of thousands have called for the cancellation of Third World Debt and the end of a system that puts the interests of profit ahead of peoples' lives. However, within the movement there has emerged a debate about how we actually tackle organisations like the World Bank.

Some activists suggest that the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO can be reformed, through an alternative vision that calls for more accountability in these institutions. Others, like Third World economist Walden Bello, while arguing against reforming these organisations, do not call for their abolition. Instead Bello has argued for 'a combination of active and passive measures to radically reduce its power and make it simply another international institution co-existing with and being checked by other institutions'. Similarly, in France during the anti-capitalist protest at Lillau, activists who called for the dismantling of institutions like the World Bank and the WTO were accused not only of 'utopianism' but also of 'lining up with free traders who wanted no market regulation'.

It is essential to see these institutions as particular aspects of a much wider capitalist system. Attempts to deal with any one of them in isolation often mean merely deflecting its horrors from one set of people to another. This is shown in arguments over the cancellation of Third World debt. Anti-debt campaigners have struggled hard to highlight how the people of the poorest countries are forced to pour their money into the coffers of the wealthiest Banks. Yet to restrict oneself to that battle alone is to leave all the other causes of Third World poverty unresolved.

Susan George, who has probably done more than any other person to highlight the burden of indebtedness on the world's poor, argues, 'Debt cancellation would, however, work to the advantage of the very system now spreading hunger and poverty throughout the Third World'. It would risk rewarding the most profligate governments, would turn recipient countries into 'financial pariahs for the foreseeable future'. Anything less than 100 percent cancellation would be worthless. Many countries are unable to pay back much of their debt already.

George's writing rightly focuses on the need to examine the nature of the system itself, but for her it is more a result of the maldevelopment of capitalism.

WTO WORLD BANK IMF



THE THREE STOOGES OF CORPORATE FOLLY

The problem then becomes one of how the system is managed, or rather mismanaged. For George, the enormous increase in the activity of the financial sector is the key-distorting factor. Finance capital is therefore seen as a cause of the warped priorities of the system rather than being one of the effects of the long period of capitalist crisis. The qualitative growth of the finance and banking sector and the activity of finance capital has its roots in the period of low profit rates and the economic stagnation of the 1970s. Large firms could not afford the cost of capital investment to update plant and machinery to compete on world markets and instead many chose to speculate on the money markets. The financial and manufacturing sectors of world capitalism then, are two sides of the same system. Capitalism cannot therefore be managed into a more benevolent state.

Particular struggles against particular effects of the system are enormously important and can even halt capitalism in its tracks for a time. However their real importance lies in building a momentum for challenging the system as a whole. It is essential that the anti-capitalist movement link up with the struggles of the working class in the Third World who have been at the forefront in the battles against neo-liberalism in their own countries.

In the last three years, there has been an intensification of protest and civil unrest in developing countries against the policies of the IMF and the World Bank. The world's poorest peoples are increasingly leading the anti-capitalist movement. A report by the World Development Movement, *States of Unrest* shows how 'millions of desperately poor people around the world have been brave enough to protest against IMF policies: doctors, farmers, priests, teachers, trade unionists and indigenous people, from Angola and Argentina to Zimbabwe and Zambia have called for an end to IMF imposed economic reforms'.

Of the 23 countries documented, nearly three-quarters have IMF-sponsored privatisation programmes, and over half of these have experienced anti-privatisation demonstrations. Half of the countries have had protests by civil service and public sector workers against policies that have cut or frozen wages or have led to redundancies. Over a third of countries have had demonstrations against the rising prices of basic goods and services because public subsidies have been removed.

Far from the domination of the World Bank being unstoppable, events in Argentina in December 2002 illustrate how people can resist. Sickened by the increasingly severe austerity measures imposed by the World Bank and the IMF, the people of Argentina brought down two governments in ten days, events which sent a chill through the corridors of Washington. Argentina is not some exception to the rule. The crisis that created those momentous events is one that is beginning to beset capitalism across the globe. The system is becoming so weak that it has no choice but to attack the conditions of workers. In this context it is more important than ever that we build a movement that will challenge the nature of a system that has unleashed untold horrors across the world.

OPEN TO DEBATE

Bin Charges

Aine Suttle, Secretary of Galway for a Safe Environment, assesses the options for an effective waste management system.

Bin charges can be used as a tool to move Ireland towards a sustainable waste management system. They can also be used as a way of re-introducing local authority taxes, putting a higher financial burden on tenants and on the poor. The problem is that a justifiable lack of trust in Government and a lack of transparency in decision-making have meant that we don't have the financial facts to decide if these charges are beneficial.

Payment for waste management via income tax or flat charges relies on good will, environmental awareness or other value-ridden factors. The response to the plastic bag tax shows us that a tangible financial reward results in massively greater results than educational campaigns and expensive TV ads.

Bin charges can be used to encourage people to minimise, reuse, recycle and compost. Usually this is done by charging zero or very little for any material collected for recycling or composting, and charging only for waste going for disposal. Households who put in the work to sort their waste then benefit by lower bin charges.

The Galway City Kerbside Recycling programme, which has achieved over 50 percent diversion from disposal in only a few months, has demonstrated that people are willing to do their part. If this programme were expanded to the rest of the country, we would reach the Government goal of 50 percent reduction of household waste in less than one year, ten years ahead of schedule.

The flat annual bin charge in Galway City this year is 250. In Galway County I believe it is 350. A quick review of bin charges in Galway since 1997 shows that they have increased from approximately 50.79 in 1997, to 250, an increase of almost 500 percent! □

Given my long history of campaigning for improved waste management, it may shock people to hear that my family is not participating in the Galway City programme, commendable though it is. Here's why:

- We compost most of our organic waste in our back garden.
- Our dry recyclables are picked up by a private recycler.
- A private hauler collects the residual.

Based on our costs so far this year, our household of three people will be paying in the region of 60 - 80 in 2002, a significant saving over the council charge. It could therefore be interpreted that the citizens of Galway City are being punished for doing the right thing.

That irritating Department of the Environment slogan, 'It's easy to make a difference', should have the addition of 'but you will pay through the nose'.

So why are bin charges around the country going up so fast? The official explanation is that landfill has become a scarce commodity. A tax has been imposed on landfills to discourage dumping.

In Galway this has resulted in an increase in landfill costs from 6.35 in 1997, to approximately 126.97 in 2002. Old landfills have been closed down and nobody wants one near them. My personal opinion is that under current political and environmental monitoring conditions, any community that accept either a landfill or an incinerator would be insane.

I am in favour of the landfill tax. The costs for landfill have to be increased to cover the cost of dramatically improved design, with safety of the environment and human health in mind. The recent report on health problems created by landfills provides us with evidence we can't ignore. Better siting, design and construction are absolute requirements. Composting of all organic material will eliminate the methane problem. Removal of dry recyclables will reduce the volume of waste to landfill.

All of these activities cost money, which has to be paid by somebody. The question is - who pays? Under the amendments of the Waste Management Act, landfill taxes will go into an Environmental Fund which will provide funding for all sorts of 'commendable' activities, instead of going directly to fund recycling and composting. In the UK it was used to hold conferences on recycling and hardly any of it went to actual recycling. It could even be used to fund incinerators.

Incineration is the preferred option for waste disposal of our government, despite all of their double-speak about integrated solutions.

A World Bank study on waste management titled, *Municipal Solid Waste Incineration: Requirements for a Successful Project* by Rand, T., Haukohl, J., Marxen, published in 2000, came to the following conclusion: 'the net treatment cost per metric ton of waste incinerated is normally at least twice the net cost of the alternative controlled landfilling. At the same time, when applying waste incineration, the economic risk in case of project failure is high.'

'If the CBA [cost-benefit analysis] is negative, disposal of waste at well-engineered and well-operated landfills is an economically and environmentally sound and sustainable solution. Indeed, upgrading existing landfill capacity and quality is often the better alternative.'

Many communities fear that the real reason why bin charges are going up is to soften us up, to accept the higher financial costs of incineration. The well known environmental and human health costs will come later. That is another article.

OPEN TO DEBATE is a forum for discussion in each issue of **Resistance**. Send letters or comments to **Resistance** at **swp@clubi.ie**



Breaking the cycle of sectarianism

Summer came early to Belfast this year. Not that there was much sun, but loyalist attacks on the Catholic homes, schools and churches, normally expected in July, started in May. A loyalist mob descended on an East Belfast campus of the Institute of Further and Higher Education while students were preparing for exams. All the students, whether Protestant or Catholic, were terrorised. One young woman was pinned to the wall and told to pronounce 'H' — one of the many sectarian stereotypes is that Protestants say 'aitch', Catholics 'haitch'. □

While the bulk of sectarian attacks are by loyalists on Catholics, there is a growing trend of attacks on Protestants in places where they are in a minority — such as the stoning of school buses carrying Protestant kids in Strabane or attacks on the Fountain enclave in Derry. And there are attacks also on anti-sectarian Protestants by loyalist thugs. The Church of Ireland rectory at Glenavy, Co. Antrim was attacked, because the vicar, Rev. Eric Storey, has written a book calling on the Church of Ireland to break its links with the Orange Order. So how can sectarianism be growing almost ten years into the peace process and four years since the Assembly was established?

Institutionalised sectarianism

The Good Friday Agreement (GFA) institutionalised sectarianism instead of setting out to end it. Loyalist and unionist politicians are deeply split over the Agreement, and none of the parties in the Executive, including Sinn Féin, puts any priority on tackling the deep poverty in which many workers, Protestant and Catholic alike, survive.

The farce of non-sectarian parties re-designating themselves as Unionists last year exposed the sectarian reality of the Assembly. Trimble could not be elected First Minister without these shenanigans, despite getting 70 percent of the votes. Under the Agreement, any vote in the Assembly on a 'key issue' has to have a 'sufficient consensus' between the 'two communities'. This is normally defined as an overall majority that includes a minimum of 40 percent of both nationalists and unionists. For the election of first and deputy first ministers, the figure is 50 percent of both Unionist and Nationalist MLAs.

This is why elected members must declare themselves to be either nationalists, unionists or others. Non-sectarian parties, who designate themselves as 'other', may as well not exist when it comes to the big votes.

Of course, after over 50 years of

Goretti Horgan shows how the new power structures in the North have ensured that sectarianism persists and poverty spreads.



Unionist misrule at Stormont, no one would be happy to have a government that did not have some power-sharing across the religious divide. But the way it is set up at present, the North may as well have one-party rule since there is no way of changing the parties in government no matter how bad a job they do on the health service, transport, education and the environment. And any issue can be sectarianised when 30 MLAs say they consider an issue requires 'sufficient consensus'. □

For example, Sammy Wilson has already made it clear that the DUP plans to make the abolition of the Eleven Plus a sectarian matter.

Fragmenting unionism

The Agreement is supposed to ensure equality between Protestants and Catholics, between Unionists and Nationalists. However agreeing to accept Catholics and Catholic political parties as equals runs counter to the loyalist ideology that sees Catholics as inferior and subversive.

The rise of sectarianism is not the handiwork of groups of thugs in interface areas, rather the blame has to be laid at the door of 'mainstream' Unionist politics in the leafy suburbs of Ballymena, Bangor, Lisburn and the like. John Dunlop, outgoing Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, told its General Assembly in June that a large part of the problem in Northern Ireland is that when Catholics start to buy houses in some areas, the Protestants start to move out. This anti-Catholic element in Unionism is what puts the Agreement most in danger. Since 1998, the right wing of Unionism, including Paisley's DUP and elements in the Unionist Party and the Orange Order, have tried to hold onto their support base by claiming everything in the Agreement is a concession to Catholics. □

The 'modernisers' around Trimble see they have no choice but to share power with Catholics. They hope peace can bring a Northern version of the

'Celtic Tiger', while retaining the Union with Britain. But Trimble is constantly looking over his shoulder at the 'rejectionists' around Jeffrey Donaldson; these would prefer a return to war than to 'have a Catholic about the place'.

Loyalist paramilitaries have long been the most ruthless and murderous expression of the anti-Catholic ideology of Unionism. Both the UDA and UVF have randomly murdered Catholics in an attempt to terrorise Catholic communities. The Shankill Butchers were members of the UVF. But the loyalists didn't act alone. They were encouraged by right-wing Unionist leaders and received assistance from British intelligence and the RUC, who supplied information on alleged republican targets. Belfast lawyer, Pat Finucane, was murdered by people who are now close associates of Johnny Adair. The UDA intelligence officer who set up the killing, Brian Nelson, was an MI5 spy. *The Stevens' Report* found evidence of 'institutionalised collusion' between security forces and loyalist murder gangs.

Moves towards peace threw the loyalist paramilitaries into turmoil. The UDA claims to be in favour of the peace process but still always accuses the UVF and its political party the PUP of being the 'peace people'. The PUP and UVF have claimed they are an alternative to sectarianism for working class Protestants. The UVF's political representatives, the PUP, claim to have seen through the 'fur coat brigade' of Unionism and talk about working class politics. But the PUP's response to Holy Cross and the assault on the Short Strand was a rush to prove the PUP's loyalist credentials by taking the side of those abusing children on their way to school. David Ervine, often the most tolerant voice of all the Unionist politicians, tried to tell us that people from the Short Strand, a small Catholic housing estate surrounded on three sides by loyalist streets, had started the trouble.

Sectarian violence is a daily reality for children in the North.

Poverty breeds sectarianism

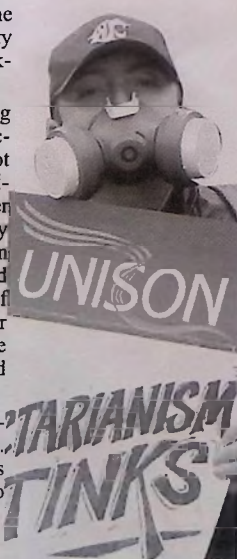
The latest figures on poverty in Northern Ireland have revealed that one third of all people in the North — over half a million people — are living in deep poverty in households with 30 percent or less of the average income. The poverty line used in Britain and the Republic tends to be 50 percent or less of the average income, while the EU tends to use 60 percent or less. The suspicion has to be that the usual 50 percent line wasn't used in the North because it would show over half the population of the North living in poverty. The 509,000 people living on about £100 a week are not all living on benefits, they are victims of the low wage economy that is being promoted abroad by all the parties in the Executive. The report shows that almost four out of ten of those living in this deep level of poverty are working. Families with children are most likely to be living in deep poverty, with two-thirds of all those in this category having young children. Half of all the poorest children are living in families where there is at least one person working.

While the figures reveal that Catholic workers remain disadvantaged relative to Protestants, they show that both Protestant and Catholic workers suffer from low pay and poverty. Half of all children from Catholic families are living in deep poverty, as are a third of Protestant children. The effect of Catholic over-representation in low paid jobs is highlighted when it comes to pensioner poverty, where most working class people rely on state pensions. There is little difference between the proportion of Protestant and Catholic pensioners who are living in deep poverty. These poverty figures, and in particular the growing numbers of working poor, tell us much about why sectarianism continues to grow. It used to be that Protestant workers could expect to find a skilled job. But now, due to the bankrupt economic policies shared by all the parties in the Stormont Executive, the only new jobs available are unskilled and low paid. By encouraging privatisation of public services and the transfer of public sector workers to the private sector, the politicians have cheered on a growing low wage economy. Of course, some people have done very well from the property speculation and building boom that has accompanied the relative peace. So, when working class Protestants look across from Derry's Waterside what they see around the Foyle Bridge are the tasteless mansions of the Catholic middle classes. When working class Protestants in Rathcoole walk down to the Lough Shore, they see the luxury cars of the Protestant middle classes on their way home to Carrickfergus. It's easy to see how they can think that everyone is doing well from the GFA but them.

Republicanism playing along

Unfortunately, instead of recognising the reality of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer since the GFA, leading republicans have endorsed the new dispensation. Last year, as over 100,000 people were protesting in Genoa against the 'race to the bottom' that has condemned so many people across the world to exploitation, poverty and oppression, former Sinn Féin Councillor Mairtin O Muilleoir was sounding like a loyal member of the World Trade Organisation.

In the *Andersonstown News* of 19th July, O Muilleoir quite rightly bemoaned the lack of a peace dividend 'in the parts of our great city which bore the brunt of the 30-year war.' Research has shown that of the new jobs arriving in Northern Ireland since 1994, two thirds have gone to areas



which were already reasonably well supplied with work. As a result, the gap between deprived areas and better off ones has widened over the last 6-8 years.

But, although the same research makes it clear that it is both Protestant and Catholic working class areas that suffer from this increasing gap between rich and poor, O Muilleoir is determined that the problem is 'US companies operating here employ FEWER Catholics now than they did before the ceasefire'. Thus the notion of a 'peace dividend' is reduced to a question of 'which side' has most opportunity to work in anti-union, low pay, rotating-shift workplaces. 'All of West Belfast needs to be designated an economic empowerment zone with a special status when it comes to attracting new business and bolstering the businesses already based there', wrote O Muilleoir. And this 'new era of investment and economic building in West Belfast must include a new tax regime which encourages firms (large and small) here by promising them corporate tax levels down from 30 percent to the ten percent more common in the South'.

Working class people in the South know the reality of an economic system with low levels of corporate tax — a health service so bad that over half the population is scared into getting health insurance and no public housing. But the rhetoric of Sinn Féin in the South — with its demand to 'share the wealth' — is replaced in the North with 'give the wealth to the global corporations'.

Then there's the performance of Sinn Féin Ministers in Stormont. A committee of Derry City Council had wanted to meet Health Minister Bairbre de Brun to discuss a £2.2 million shortfall in the budget of the Western Health Board. In a letter to the Council, the Minister said there was nothing to discuss. The Western Health Board, she insisted, is not under-funded. Problems have been created, she admits, by... 'higher than anticipated pay settlements'. But, the Western Board, she says, has received a 'proportionate share' of the available funds. It has 'sufficient resources to enable service development to proceed in a... phased way'.

It's not just what she says. It's the way that she says it. The exact language of the prudent Minister slapping down a group of spendthrift whingers, even to the extent of putting part of the blame on the nurses' pay rise. It would be wrong to personalise the issue. The same letter would have been written in the same terms if it hadn't been Ms. de Brun, but a member of the SDLP or the OUP or the DUP who had taken the Health Ministry.

While Caoimhin O Caolain wins votes for opposing the downgrading of Monaghan hospital, 30 odd miles away, Bairbre de Brun is closing acute services at Omagh's South Tyrone hospital, in spite of a long campaign to keep them open. Waiting lists in the North are the highest in the UK. Despite Sinn Féin's rhetoric against privatisation in the South, de Brun supports the privatisation of the NHS through the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and every new school built by McGuinness' ministry has to have PFI money.

It becomes clearer daily that what we have in the North is a nakedly capitalist government, one whose policies are no different to New Labour or the Tories. All parties in the Executive, including Sinn Féin, agree to lower taxes for business, to public spending cuts and to privatisation. Small wonder then that those at the bottom look for someone beneath them that they can kick — and so the sectarian cycle continues.



Tens of thousands marched against the sectarian murder of Danny McCoolgan

The alternative

There is an alternative to the vicious cycle of sectarianism. It lies in the tradition of Protestant and Catholic workers uniting to fight as a class against the bosses. One trade unionist, born and bred on the Shankill, regularly complains 'there is no solution to the problems of working people on the Shankill which does not also help the people of the Falls — and vice versa. When are people on both sides going to see that?' Down through history, they have seen just that — there is a need for unity every week in workplaces across the North. Following the rallies this January to protest at postal worker Daniel McCoolgan's murder, Eamonn McCann told a meeting: *What was different about these rallies is they might never have taken place if the postal workers from the Communication Workers' Union had not been so quick to act in the light of the murder of their colleague. The lines of communication were there. The basic organisation was there for a decision making function. That in turn energised the wider union movement. That is where the rallies came from.*

Catholics and Protestants only ever came together on issues that affected them at working class level. When we are fighting on class issues, we are no longer fighting for one community or the other. We embrace our identities as part of the working class. Republicans and others often accuse the trade union movement of being insufficiently militant in relation to sectarianism and to Northern politics. The problem is that the unions have been insufficiently militant in relation to the bread and butter issues — pay, conditions and the fight against privatisation.

If the unions stood against the corporate takeover of our public services then the solidarity coming from that kind of militancy would flow over to the struggle against sectarianism. The trade union movement is the key to fighting sectarianism. This is not about people in overalls running down to the barricades and fighting people in three-piece suits. It means working people defending themselves and their pay. If we had a lot more of that, we would have a lot less sectarianism.

The problem is that every time this happens, communal politicians move quickly to stir up sectarianism. That is why socialists need to be organised in every community, in every local area across the North, unafraid to challenge the attachment of Protestant workers to loyalism and of Catholic workers to republicanism, trying instead to build on what unites us, rather than what divides us all. This has never been a more urgent task.

The origins of Zionism

From victims to a watchdog state

Brian Kelly looks at the origins of Zionism and how it has always dovetailed with the interests of Western Imperialism

The irony of Israel's recent re-invasion of Palestinian towns in the West Bank is that its incursions coincided with the anniversary of another confrontation between a vastly outgunned population and a racist occupying army — the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. In 1943, a handful of Jewish socialists and militants trapped in the crumbling Polish ghetto by the Nazis resolved to go down fighting, inflicting 'maximum damage' in the process. Today it is the Palestinian fighters in towns like Jenin, Ramallah and Bethlehem who best epitomise the spirit of the Warsaw resistance. The Israeli Defence Forces and the Zionist state have adopted the brutal tactics of the most vicious Jew-haters in history.

The founders of the Israeli state, from its very beginning in 1948, claimed the legacy of the victims of the Holocaust. Zionists claimed that the aim of the ghetto fighters was to reach Palestine, and argued that the ghetto fights demonstrated that Zionism had resisted the Nazis. Both claims were false. The Jewish Fighting Organisation (ZOB) went out of its way to ensure that no preparations were made for refuge in the non-Jewish neighbourhoods of Warsaw, for fear of undermining the fighting spirit of its militants. While some left-wing Zionists did fight valiantly, the backbone of the resistance came from the left, most of whom were anti-Zionist Jews.

When ceremonies marking the 50th anniversary of the Ghetto Fights were held in Poland in 1993, Israeli Zionists refused to take part unless the last surviving member of the ZOB, Jewish socialist Marek Edelman, was excluded from the platform. And in a reminder of how little the modern Israeli state can claim a link to the Jews who stood and fought in the 1940s, an IDF commander told his fellow officers before the recent onslaught, 'If our job is to seize a densely packed refugee camp or take over the Nablus casbah... without casualties on both sides, [we] must before all else analyse and bring together the lessons of past battles, even... to analyse how the German army operated in the Warsaw ghetto.'

Israel's recent atrocities are difficult to reconcile with its claim to represent the descendants of those who suffered the most horrific crime in the history of capitalism — Hitler's 'final solution'. Some see the recent events as an aberration, the result of the maniacal militarism of Ariel Sharon. However, the roots of Israeli aggression run much deeper. Israel is a colonial project founded upon the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians whose essential function over many years has been to frustrate — both in its own interest and on behalf of western imperialism — any attempt at democratisation in the region. Organised terror on the scale seen in recent months has been a recurring feature of that effort.

The politics of despair

How could the descendants of the victims of the Holocaust contemplate the brutality now being inflicted upon Palestinians? The answer lies in the triumph of Zionism as an ideology that came to

dominate the world's Jews in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Israel's rulers today proclaim the 'Jewish homeland' as the realisation of a centuries old longing for a return to Palestine. In actual fact, before the Holocaust Zionism remained confined to a small minority of Jews, the vast majority of Jews (90 percent of whom resided in Europe and Russia) wished to live in equality in the west. Many fought alongside non-Jews in the working class movements in central and Eastern Europe and viewed the Zionists as a crackpot, reactionary cult without any serious prospects for success.

The rising tide of anti-semitism and an intensification of nationalist feeling throughout Europe gave rise to a new political strain of Zionism in the late nineteenth century that sought the setting up of a Jewish state. Its founder, Theodore Hertzl, who had only several years earlier dismissed the possibility of 'return', reacted against the anti-semitism revealed in the Dreyfus trial (1895) by soliciting support among European elites for the creation of a Jewish homeland.

Far from presenting itself as a formula for the liberation of Jews, Zionism was based on a profound sense of pessimism and despair. Hertzl described anti-semitism as 'an understandable reaction to Jewish defects'. He accepted the inevitability of anti-semitism, declaring that during the Dreyfus affair he had 'achieved a freer attitude towards anti-semitism' and 'recognised the futility of trying to combat [it].'

Hertzl's attempt to win support for the Zionist project was an explicitly colonial undertaking. After considering the establishment of 'homelands' in Uganda and Argentina, Hertzl settled upon the idea of a Jewish homeland in the Middle East, retrospectively using Biblical arguments. He stated that a Jewish state would construct there 'a rampart of civilisation in a sea of Arab barbarism'. It was not initially among the European masses that he sought support, but among the imperial powers of the day who, even before the discovery of oil in the region, shared his interest in controlling and stabilising the Middle East.

The Imperialist connection

The public figures approached by Zionists reads like a 'who's who' of European reaction. Hertzl admired Cecil Rhodes, the British founder of white Rhodesia, and believed that 'in England the idea of Zionism, which is a colonial idea, would be easily understood.'

In Russia he met with Wenzel Von Plehve, the interior minister who had

Israeli soldiers: armed to the hilt by America



orchestrated pogroms against the Jews, and agreed to quash any criticism of the Tsar at the 1903 Zionist Congress in return for support for the Palestine project. The appeal to the forces of imperialism outlived Hertzl: his successor Chaim Weizmann continued to solicit British support, which was particularly important after the collapse of Ottoman rule in the region.

The Balfour Declaration declared British support for a 'national home for the Jewish people,' an outcome recognised by Winston Churchill as 'beneficial' and 'in harmony with the truest interests of the British Empire.' In their most despicable act, Zionists in Germany sought Hitler's support for a Jewish homeland, declaring that 'our acknowledgment of Jewish nationality provides for a clear and sincere relationship to the German people, and its national and racial realities... we do not wish to falsify these fundamentals, because we too are against mixed marriage and are for maintaining the purity of the Jewish group.'

As late as the 1930s the Zionist project had failed to win the mass of the Jewish people. Jewish emigration to Palestine accelerated after Balfour, but most Jews who chose emigration as a means of escaping persecution still chose overwhelmingly to emigrate to Western Europe or the United States.

Supporters of the Israeli state speak of an eternal conflict between Palestinians and Jews to justify Zionist militarism. They argue that Jews have been compelled to arm themselves to guard against anti-semitic outrages directed at them by Palestinians. This is untrue. Israeli journalist Tom Segev has recently described 800 years of friendly relations between Arabs and Jews in Hebron, and a recent history of Jerusalem argues that 1300 years of Islamic rule in the city had been marked by 'tolerance of both Judaism and Christianity.' John Rose has concluded that 'the virulence of European anti-semitism, with its roots partly in the medieval Christian conception of the Jew, had no echo in the Arab world.' That peaceful coexistence was shattered when right-wing Zionists began constructing an 'Iron Wall' to subjugate the Arabs and facilitate the influx of Jewish immigration from the 1920s onwards.

The massive trauma inflicted on European Jews by the Holocaust undermined the assimilationist argument and elevated the appeal of Zionism among survivors. As Rose writes 'the world after 1945 did actually appear to confirm the Hertzl prognosis.' In retrospect, mainstream Zionist organisations behaved despicably throughout the war. Early on they attempted to cut deals with the Third Reich and they refused to criticise their powerful patrons — the US and Britain — for failing to rescue Jews from the gas chambers. Leading Zionists blocked attempts to allow refugees into the US and Western Europe out of fear that this would upset their plans. But in the wake of the Nazi horror, the pessimism of Zionism matched the mood of deep despair among Holocaust survivors.

Watchdog for the West

The Zionist project, at the end of the war, complemented the economic and strategic interests of the leading imperial powers, of Britain and the United States. The vast oil reserves in the Middle East demanded that they found a means of maintaining control in the region. With the acquiescence of the



Young Palestinians fight Israeli oppression

United Nations, dominated by the US, Palestine was partitioned in 1947, with 55 percent of the land assigned to Jews — only 30 percent of the population — and the remainder was assigned to the Palestinians. From that point until today, the realisation of Zionist aims involved the continued expulsion of Palestinians from their homeland. □

Through the deployment of terror 700,000 Palestinians were driven out of their homes into exile, and by 1949 Israel controlled 80 percent of Palestine. Those who resisted were denounced as terrorists but privately Israeli officials acknowledged otherwise. David Ben-Gurion noted privately that 'politically we are the aggressors and they defend themselves.' He noted 'an active resistance by the Palestinians to what they regard as a usurpation of their homeland by the Jews... Behind the terrorism is a movement which though primitive is not devoid of idealism and self-sacrifice.'

Gurion, ostensibly a 'left winger', was no more sympathetic to the claims of Palestinians in spite of his candid honesty: 'A comprehensive agreement is undoubtedly out of the question now. Only after total despair on the part of the Arabs, despair that will come not only from the failure of the disturbances and the attempt at rebellion, but also as a consequence of our growth... may the Arabs possibly acquiesce in a Jewish Eretz Israel.' This desire to crush any opposition is still prominent in the events following the latest Intifada.

Israel's ability to get away with recurring atrocities is linked to its relationship to the United States. Its immunity is a reward for services rendered to imperialism. Within three years of the founding of the Zionist state, the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* spelled out the role the new state would play in protecting US interests in the region:

'Israel is to become the watchdog... if for any reasons the Western powers should sometimes prefer to close their eyes, Israel could be relied upon to punish one or several neighbouring countries whose discourtesy to the West went beyond the bounds of the permissible.'

Israel is a racist state founded upon ethnic cleansing, a watchdog for American imperialism and an arms merchant for some of the most right wing regimes on earth. It has made allies of some of the bloodiest dictatorships in the world, it traded arms and nuclear intelligence with the apartheid regime in South Africa. That is the essential role that the state of Israel has played throughout its history, and explains why Bush considers it such a crucial ally in his so-called 'war on terror', bankrolling its military adventures and lauding the war criminal Ariel Sharon as a 'man of peace.'

One could hardly imagine a more insulting testament to the Jewish victims of fascism in Europe than allowing Zionism to bury its atrocities under the cover of the world's outrage at the war crimes of an earlier generation. The spirit of the Warsaw Ghetto lives today in Jenin, not Tel Aviv.

Is anti-semitism on the rise?

'One of the chief tasks of any dialogue with the Gentile world is to prove that the distinction between anti-semitism and anti-Zionism is not a distinction at all [and that Jewish critics of Israel] have a basic complex... of guilt about Jewish survival.'

Abba Eban,

Israeli Labour Party, in the Knesset, July 31, 1972

Coinciding with renewed public outrage over Israeli brutality against the Palestinians there have appeared a flurry of newspaper editorials accusing critics of Israel — specifically left-wing anti-Zionists — of being part of a new wave of anti-semitism. Britain's chief rabbi Jonathan Sacks recently equated any criticism of Israel with a 'calling into question the Jewish people's right to exist collectively.'

A prominent Italian liberal, in a book described by the European Observatory on Racism as 'explicitly anti-Muslim, anti-Arab and anti-immigrant,' denounced Palestinian sympathisers as 'anti-semites who would sell their own mothers to a harem to see Jews once again in the gas chambers'. Sharon himself has accused those demanding an investigation of war crimes in Jenin of committing anti-semitic 'blood libel'.

What are we to make of all this? If there has been a palpable rise in anti-semitism in recent months, then socialists belong in the front lines of an urgent and forceful response. The fate of the Jewish people and of the left have been closely intertwined throughout the history of capitalism.

It has been the left which has taken on fascists and anti-semites when they attempt to move in from the margins and win a mass audience. Socialists and communists paid a high price for such efforts in Hitler's Germany, being murdered and sent off to the concentration camps alongside Jews and others. It was the left in Britain that defended the Jewish East End of London against fascists in the 1930s.

Reports from across Europe confirm a growth in anti-semitism. There has been an increase in physical attacks on Jews in Britain and France, and a number of synagogues were attacked in recent months. But these are part of a general intensification of racism, more often directed at immigrants and asylum seekers, especially Arabs and Muslims.

The charge that public criticism of Israel has fuelled such attacks is ludicrous, and deflects attention from the real source of the violence. All the evidence indicates, as Seamus Milne writes, 'that it is the far right, the traditional fount of anti-semitic poison, which has been overwhelmingly responsible for attacks on both Muslim and Jewish targets in Europe.'

Supporters of Israel have been completely silent about widespread anti-Arab racism. The rise of the



Jewish victims of the Holocaust

far right across Europe has made racism respectable, and traditional social democratic parties have been falling over each other to prove their anti-immigrant credentials. In this context it is hardly surprising that racist thugs feel safe to crawl out and assault immigrants, or that Jews have also been targeted.

Despite clear evidence that the far right is behind these attacks, the finger of blame has been pointed at the 'pro-Palestinian left'. Zionists have in fact welcomed support for their efforts from some unsavoury characters. A full text translation of Italian journalist Oriana Fallacci's *Anger and Pride*, which described Muslims as 'vile creatures who urinate in baptisteries' and 'multiply like rats' was posted to pro-Israeli web sites within days of publication. Prominent American Zionist Martin Peretz, who has led the charge on 'left' anti-semitism, complained that television coverage of the conflict in the Middle East has failed to 'explain that the Arab national character tends towards violence and incitement'.

'Passionate support for Israel combines readily with fervent anti-semitism' among the Christian right, Noam Chomsky has written, tracing the relationship back to the early 1980s, when right wing American Christians donated millions to Jewish settlements on the West Bank. More than twenty years ago prominent supporters of Israel in the US concluded that 'right-wing reactionaries are the natural allies of Zionism and not the liberals,' and have in the years since cultivated a close relationship between what one American Jewish writer calls 'an ironic combination of overt Jew-haters and pro-Israeli Jews.'

This latest campaign by supporters of Israel is a reminder of how Zionists have cynically deployed the tragedy of the Holocaust to deflect criticism of Israel. San Francisco College authorities threatened to suspend or jail demonstrators in support of Palestine, accusing them of anti-semitism. The administration was forced to retreat after the General Union of Palestinian Students (GUPS) produced their own video (available at www.sfgups.cjb.net) showing Zionist demonstrators heaping racist insults at them — Arab students were called 'animals,' 'sand niggers,' 'camel jockeys,' and 'terrorists'.

For more than thirty years, every attempt to win solidarity for Palestinians has come up against efforts by supporters of Israel to discredit anti-Zionists as anti-semites. Zionists have insisted that Zionism and Judaism are synonymous — one can't be a 'real' Jew and be critical of Israel at the same time. The left, with a proud record of standing up to racism and anti-semitism, has nothing to apologise for. Instead it is the defenders of Sharon and Bush who give space for the real anti-semites to win a hearing. □

The more successful Israel is in its oppression of Palestine, the stronger the forces of bigotry become. A concerted campaign to stop Sharon, involving Jews, Arabs and solidarity activists from around the world can put the bigots on the run and sow the seed of real unity.

by Brian Kelly

Crisis for Arafat

Ryan McKinney
examines the pressures on
Arafat's Palestinian Authority

Yasser Arafat has become, not for the first time in his career, the symbol of resistance for the desperate and battered inhabitants of the West Bank, and the Gaza strip. He was besieged for 5 months in his Ramallah compound, shunned by the US, his life subject to daily threats from the Israeli cabinet.

On his release from Sharon's grip Arafat was paraded through the tank-ravaged streets of Ramallah, cheered on by Palestinians as a victorious hero who had won his freedom without bowing to Israeli pressure. They applauded him at the Sheikh Zayd hospital as he visited the latest victims of the 'war on terror'. They trusted him when he said that Sharon would never defeat them. But since then, Arafat has conducted himself more like a pet let out on a leash rather than a fighter for his people. In place of the respect shown him only weeks earlier there is now deep anger at the betrayal orchestrated by the remnants of the Palestinian Authority.

Arafat emerged from his captivity with the same back-bending enthusiasm that he has shown to King Hussein of Jordan, President Hafez al-Assad of Syria and every US administration for the last 20 years. While successive Labour and Likud governments followed up the Oslo agreement with accelerated settlement building, Arafat applied his authority not against Israeli expansionism but to rein in those opposed to the settlement.

When he crept out of his Ramallah bunker a few weeks ago he had done yet another deal. This time he handed over six militants into joint US/UK custody and allowed thirteen militants from the Church of the Nativity to be sent into exile across Europe. Incredibly, it has emerged that his release seems also to have been granted under condition that the Palestinian Authority relent on appeals for an investigation into the massacre of refugees in Jenin.

After being squeezed by Sharon, Arafat's response has been to arrest militants suspected of opposing the illegal occupation and defending their homes and families. He has tortured opponents, protected the Israeli settlements and given his cronies carte blanche to continue their corruption. It was for these reasons that survivors at Jenin jeered him on his recent visit.

Now Bush has dispatched CIA chief George Tenet to 'advise' Arafat on how to 'reform'

his administration. But these 'reforms' will not alleviate the plight of ordinary Palestinians or make the resistance more effective, they are, in fact, meant to strangle it. Arafat is being pressed by the US to rebuild the police force that Ariel Sharon has tried so hard to destroy for the last 6 months. The US is said to favour placing the security apparatus under Mohammed Dahlan, a 'dapper and wealthy' Arafat aide regarded by the CIA as someone they can work with. Ordinary Palestinians regard him as a leading figure in the corrupt PA, personally implicated in widespread human rights violations. Arafat has cut his cabinet from 32 bureaucrats to 21. The PA, under close CIA supervision, will be run by an even smaller group of Arafat loyalists who have made themselves rich by controlling public and private monopolies.

Writing about Arafat's emergence from his besieged compound, The Guardian journalist Charles Glass asked 'which Arafat will emerge now?' Would it be the leader who would encourage the right of an occupied people to resist, or the collaborator who would conspire with the US and Israel to stifle resistance. In the weeks since, it has become clear which one has emerged. The US wants Arafat's CIA trained police force of around 50,000 to control its own people, so that a very much watered down Oslo II accord can be implemented. Here time is of the essence, as Bush is eager to push his 'war on terror' on to Iraq and wants no distractions from this end.

In the late 70s the Geneva talks initiated by US President Jimmy Carter were stillborn because Israel refused to talk to the PLO. In his book, *Arafat*, Alan Hart quotes a PLO official who recalled that in order to get the talks off the ground Arafat 'bent so far backwards to be helpful he even said that the Palestinians did not have to be represented by PLO officials.'

The problem for Arafat is that such an attitude will not satisfy ordinary Palestinians but is likely to enrage them, adding further fuel to the fire. In this sense the Intifada is as much a revolt against the Palestinian Authority as it is against Israeli occupation. Arafat once had a close aide by the name of Abu Iyad, whose responsibility it was to kill him if he went too far in the direction of compromise. Iyad was assassinated by Israel some months ago and Arafat has been in no hurry to replace him.

There is an alternative to the continual betrayals of the Arafat administration. A force exists that can overcome the stalemate posed by superior Israeli firepower — this is the power of the Arab working class across the region. The liberation of Palestine will only come through the defeat of imperialism in the Middle East, the road to a liberated Jerusalem leads through Cairo and Damascus.

The wave of demonstrations across the Arab world in recent months has shown the potential for such an upheaval. From Morocco in North Africa to Saudi Arabia in the Persian Gulf, the entire region has witnessed major demonstrations in response to Israeli brutality and against Arab ruling class complicity. As Israel's sickening onslaught has intensified, people have taken to the streets to show solidarity and to call for action by their rulers.

Over a million people marched in May in Morocco and in Damascus, the capital of Syria. There President Bashar al-Assad was forced to officially endorse the demonstration because of pressure from students and workers. In Algeria, even the large Berber minority, who are themselves constantly persecuted, demonstrated against the US and Israel. There have also been significant solidarity protests in the Yemen, Turkey, Libya, Iraq, Qatar, Kuwait, and in Lebanon, where protests were met with fierce police brutality. Deep-rooted resentment of the wealth of the royal family in Saudi Arabia, combined with anger over massive US troop deployment there, have meant that ordinary Saudis are beginning to challenge their once-feared religious police.

The most significant solidarity movement has emerged in Egypt. There, conference rallies and demonstrations are organised daily, and there is an ongoing boycott of US and Israeli goods. Demonstrations by students in Cairo have given the lead to workers; committees have sprung up to organise activities and events. In Cairo, solidarity has been organised by the Egyptian Popular Committee in Solidarity with the Palestinian Intifada (EPCSPI), while in Alexandria workers and students have set up the Popular Committee in Solidarity with the Palestinian People (PCSPPP). It took only two weeks for the government to start clamping down on the protests.

In April a demonstration of 8,000 students was joined by thousands of workers. An attack by 'anti-riot' police left 20-year-old Mohammed El Saqqa dead. This did nothing to discourage the movement. According to the Cairo based *Al-Ahram Weekly*, demonstrations continue daily and 'clusters of small Palestinian flags are visible in the streets of Abdin, Helmia and Heliopolis.' Defying emergency legislation put in place after the assassination of President Sadat in 1981, the recent upsurge has seen mass defiance of attempts to ban demonstrations. Rallies to commemorate the 54th anniversary of Al-Nakbah ('The Catastrophe' for the Palestinians — the formation of the Israeli state) last month were attended by tens of thousands of Egyptians despite the fact that leading EPCSPI and PCSPPP members were rounded up by police beforehand.

This radicalisation has opened up the best opportunities for the left in decades. Banners on the protests outside Mugamma Al-Tahrir, the Egyptian government's central administration offices, carried not just Arab nationalist or Islamist slogans but also left-wing slogans of the Tagammu Party. According to *Al-Ahram* the loudspeakers blasted out slogans such as 'No False Initiatives, No to Normalisation' and 'Revolution, Revolution, 'till Victory, from Egypt to Palestine.' Veteran left-wing lawyer Nabil El-Hilali, who attended the Tahrir Square rally told *Al-Ahram*, 'This demonstration is sending a clear message to the Palestinians, telling them that the Egyptian people support them'. He added that it was 'also sending

Justice for Palestine

Protesting at
the Palestinian
Authority
against the
occupation and
food shortages.

a message to the Zionists and their American supporters...that if they are relying on the Arab regimes they must know that it is the people who will determine the fate of the battle, and the people are determined to stand side by side with the Palestinians till victory.'

During the first Intifada, Algerian workers challenged their own state in battles resembling those on the streets of Jerusalem, and the Egyptian media has begun referring to the latest upsurge as the 'Egyptian Intifada'. The potential for massive radicalisation and demonstrations presents a worrying challenge to the Arab rulers. It also presents great potential for the Arab left. Socialists in the region must move quickly to provide a clear lead and begin to draw the links between the plight of Palestinians and of the mass of Arab workers across the region.

As Egyptians, Lebanese, Algerians and Saudis strive to show solidarity they will find that their own state is a barrier to its expression. This must lead to a questioning of the role that their own states play in the imperialist system dominating the region. Real freedom for Palestine can only be delivered by an Arab revolution that overthrows the corrupt and repressive regimes blocking ordinary Arabs from expressing concrete solidarity with their Palestinian brothers and sisters.

The solidarity movements in neighbouring states, as well as those in Europe and the US, will encourage the ordinary Palestinians. Without an organised challenge to his leadership, Arafat will compromise in any negotiations and the hopes and aspirations of Palestinians will again go unfulfilled. Only a democratic, secular state with equal rights for Jews, Muslims, Christians and non-believers can bring justice, and only an Arab revolution can realise this. As for Arafat, the people supported him when he was surrounded by tanks but, having sacrificed so much, they cannot be expected to follow him into 'agreements' that would throw it all away for a few paltry concessions from Sharon and his friends in the White House.

IRELAND UNCOVERED

Church and state

Covering up child abuse

Turn the pages of any newspaper these days and you'll find another expose of the sexual abuse of children by Catholic clerics, be it in America, Australia, Canada, England or Ireland.

In America the Catholic Church is in deep crisis with nationwide revelations of the systematic abuse of children by priests, and of the hierarchy's determined efforts to cover-up the crimes and protect the criminals. The Pope had to summon his US cardinals to Rome for crisis talks, while George W. Bush rushed to the Vatican for a private meeting on the matter.

The Archbishop of Milwaukee had to resign a few weeks ago for protecting clerical child rapists in his diocese. The Cardinal of Los Angeles, who recently sacked 12 abusing priests, refused to co-operate with a police inquiry. Recently, the Archdiocese of New York had to open its secret files on clerical sex abuse to the District Attorney. They stretched back 40 years.

An estimated \$1bn has already been paid out to abuse victims in the States, and that was before the present avalanche of claims. At the same time, Church income is falling off. Boston's major Church fundraiser, the Cardinal's spring garden party, had to be cancelled this year because the Cardinal himself is accused of covering up sex abuse cases involving over 80 Boston priests.

In Canada the 157-year old Order of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate declared themselves bankrupt after receiving thousands of sex abuse claims. The Canadian Christian Brothers, too, went into receivership, claiming they were unable to pay their many victims, a claim the receiver found to be untrue.

But it is in Ireland that the Catholic Church faces by far the greatest volume of allegations of child sex abuse. Over 3,000 former child victims have given details to the Laffoy Commission on the abuse of children. All say they were abused in institutions run by religious orders. The number doesn't include children abused in their homes, churches or youth clubs, by priests such as Sean Fortune, Ivan Payne and many others like them.

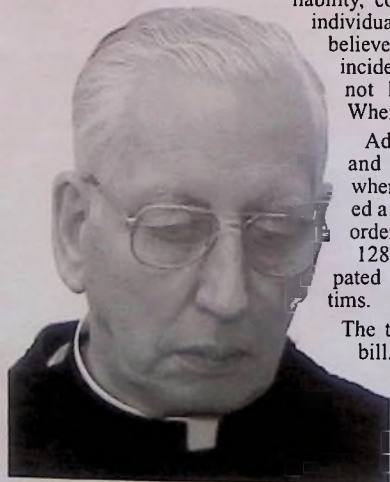
For once, the Gardai have done a decent job. Their investigations resulted in scores of files going to the DPP, bulging with evidence about mainly Christian Brother abusers, including serial child rapists who worked at industrial schools such as Artane and Letterfrack.

Yet the DPP — whose decisions cannot be questioned — has ruled against prosecuting many of the abusers, while dust gathers on the files of the rest. Victims have abandoned hope of ever seeing their tormentors face justice.

Only one serving Christian Brother has ever been jailed, Jack Kelly, who admitted a long list of sexual assaults on small boys. But he's the tip of an iceberg. As in America and Australia, the hierarchy here has been exposed for concealing the truth and protecting the abusers.

"...if any victims persist in suing, the state has guaranteed the religious total financial immunity..."

Cardinal Connell protected his priests



A recent BBC programme, *Suing the Pope*, showed how the Church failed to stop Fr Sean Fortune abusing children in the diocese of Ferns. The revelations forced the resignation of Bishop Brendan Comiskey.

At the same time Marie Collins, who was abused as a child by Fr Paul McGennis, revealed that Cardinal Connell had refused to help her prosecute McGennis in the mid '90s — even though the priest had told his religious superiors he was guilty.

When Ms Collins gave police a letter that the Dublin Archdiocese sent her, detailing McGennis's admissions of guilt, Connell's right hand man, Monsignor Alex Stenson, threatened to sue her for breaching confidentiality. Then came revelations about Monsignor Micheal Ledwith, former president of Maynooth College who resigned suddenly in 1994.

The Church's silence on his strange departure was broken a few weeks ago when they admitted there had been allegations of sexual abuse against Ledwith in the early 1980s. At this time he was vice-president of the college and he paid one of his accusers a large sum of money in a secret settlement.

It also emerged that several senior seminarians from Maynooth had complained about Ledwith to the Catholic Primate, Cardinal O Fiaich, as well as to Cardinal Daly and seven other bishops. Following these complaints, Ledwith was promoted to the presidency of Maynooth while a senior dean at the college who backed the seminarians was demoted and humiliated.

And if you thought the Church was remorseful about any of this, think again. Despite their frequent and sweeping 'apologies,' they continue to deny every specific allegation and to contest every individual case that goes to law.

This is how one church solicitor wrote to a victim's solicitor: 'Whilst our clients do not admit any liability, collectively or on the part of any individual, they do regret that your client believes he was damaged as a result of incidents, which our clients contend did not happen, during the period ...' Where does that leave sincerity?

Adding insult to injury, the devout and conservative Michael Woods, when Minister for Education, negotiated a scandalous deal with the religious orders whereby they will contribute 128m, just 25 percent of the anticipated cost of compensating their victims.

The taxpayer will foot the rest of the bill. And if any victims persist in suing, the state has guaranteed the religious total financial immunity, agreeing to pay all their costs — awards and fees — from taxpayers' money.

Arms spending and market chaos

After WW2 the arms race between the US and the Soviet Union squandered huge resources, which could have eliminated starvation and poverty on the planet. It also shaped the priorities of the whole system. For thirty years this shameful spending on arms inadvertently underpinned the stability of capitalism. Kevin Wingfield explains how this was so, and what it reveals about the workings of the capitalist system today.



Capitalism is a system continually prone to crisis. It is a dog-eat-dog system where each capitalist is competing with each other to exploit workers and cut costs.

This leads to periods of feverish booms followed by devastating busts. Marx predicted that, as the system aged, booms would become more fragile and short-lived and slumps would become deeper and more protracted. The political consequences of this process were that the system would less and less be able to offer lasting reforms. Economic crises would trigger political crises and social revolution.

Writing during the great slump of the 1930s Trotsky believed that the capitalist system was running into the buffers with little scope for recovery. He saw that financial crises, slumps and unemployment made the whole system unstable. In this situation the ruling classes could opt for political extremes in an attempt to shore up the system. One of these was fascism.

But what if capitalism regained its composure? What if it could not only avoid slump but could even afford substantial reforms to working class people? The prospects for revolution would certainly be taken off the agenda for that period. The post war boom took many Marxists by surprise.

Some socialists saw it as evidence that capitalism had overcome its problems, that Marxism and revolutionary politics, indeed all class politics — was obsolete. They became reformists and apologists for the system.

Other leftists tried to deny that the boom was happening, arguing that a huge crisis was just around the corner and that nothing had

changed. Those who did this retreated into becoming hysterical sects, not serious revolutionaries confronting the reality of the world. Writers in the tradition represented by the SWP attempted to understand the long boom and explain it theoretically.

Capitalist crisis

Capitalism has always been a system of booms and slumps. At the start of the cycle many capitalists see profitable opportunities and begin to invest in new projects. Workers get taken on from the pool of unemployed and demand for goods and services increase. This creates an optimistic environment for investment as capitalists rush in to take advantage of the situation.

As the boom continues, though, and unemployment declines, workers are able to command better wages. As big investment projects are undertaken there are sudden bottlenecks in the supply of raw materials and of machinery or fuel — the supply of which cannot be expanded quickly enough to meet the sudden surge in demand.

This leads to rises in costs for capitalists and eats into their profits. The least efficient firms suddenly find that they are no longer profitable and many go bust. Workers are laid off and, as a result, demand for products slumps leading to more workers being sacked and more bankruptcies. Production stagnates or falls and the level of new investment falls.

The firms that survive often buy up the assets of their bankrupted rivals at knock down prices. As unemployment weakens the bargaining position of workers, employers are able to cut wages. The general slump in production means that raw

materials and machinery prices begin to fall. A point is eventually reached where a number of capitalists find it profitable to begin investing again. If enough of them invest the graph picks up and the boom begins again.

If this cycle were endlessly repeated — accelerated production, boom, crisis of over-production, downswing, unemployment, followed by a fresh recovery — there would be no reason to believe that the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism would ever come onto the agenda.

Inbuilt Flaws

Keynes argued in the 1930s that if governments managed demand by, for example, deficit financing, they could prime the pumps to maintain the economy at full employment even during less favourable economic conditions. But Marx believed that there was a far more serious tendency inherent in capitalism that would, over time, lead to crisis.

Marx argued that the threat of over-production and unemployment was an unavoidable feature of capitalism. Indeed the danger becomes greater as time goes on. Competition leads each company to attempt to cut costs to increase the amount of surplus squeezed from workers. If it fails to do so it is bankrupted or swallowed up by its rivals.

Key to a firm's competitive strength is its size and scope of operations. Big firms can mobilise resources and grab market share in a way that most small firms cannot. This means that each capitalist firm is forced to grow as quickly as possible through 'accumulation' — reinvesting the profits squeezed from workers into expanding capital through mergers and take-overs.

Under the pressure of competition, each firm invests more and more in machinery and technology to replace some of their workers and get more productivity out of those remaining. Production will become more 'capital intensive'.

This change in what Marx called the 'organic composition of capital' gives rise to a decline in the rate of profit. How? The capitalists get their profit from exploiting workers, paying them less than the value of what they produce. Since this unpaid labour is the sole source of profit and the outlay on labour power declines relative to the spending on machinery, indeed, as a proportion of all investment outlay, profit as proportion of total investment tends to decline.

Added to this is the constant threat of overproduction in the system. The fact that workers under capitalism are exploited — not paid the full share of what they produce — means that over-production is inbuilt into the system. Workers cannot afford to consume all that is produced. Goods stockpile, the economy stagnates, firms go bust and workers are laid off.

Capitalists could themselves mitigate the effects by buying up the excess production, partly through greater investment in production. But for the capitalist to invest, he must be confident of what he regards as an adequate rate of return. If profit rates decline, each capitalist will be tempted to postpone fresh investments in productive capital for fear that the returns do not justify the risks. Instead they will look to grow by using their profits to speculate on the property or stock markets, or by trying to take over other firms.

When this happens goods which might have gone into productive investments languish in factories and warehouses, causing the economy to enter a protracted period of slump with stagnation



The victorious allies before the Cold War

if not collapse. A current example is that of Japan whose economy has been stagnating with bad debt, over-investment and insufficient demand for the past decade following a feverish boom.

If governments engaged in Keynesian demand management by expanding public spending they can provide a temporary respite for the economy. But this would hardly represent a long-term solution to the problem. The government would have to borrow to fund the spending programme, which would raise interest rates and divert funds from other investment projects. Alternatively, it could print money, which would devalue the currency and increase inflation. The buoyant economy would suck in exports and eventually precipitate a balance of payments crisis.

Were the tendency for the rate of profit to fall without any off-setting factors, capitalism would have run into the sands long ago. There are other factors involved. Marx believed that these 'countervailing tendencies' could only have a temporary effect and in the long run the tendency of profit to fall would reassert itself.

Most of the surplus value taken from workers is invested in production expansion. As discussed above, competitive pressure to grow forces capitalists to do this most of the time. If a part of this surplus was not re-invested in this way the subsequent fall in the rate of profit could be slowed down or even arrested for a period. The emergence of an arms race offered a temporary respite from this cycle.

Arms spending

At the end of the Second World War the world was dominated by two super powers, the USA and Russia. The military rivalry between these two locked each into a massive arms race. Michael Kidron pointed out that in the early 1960s American (and Russian) military spending was enormous. The equivalent of between 8 and 9 percent of the world's output of all goods and services was spent annually on arms. This amounted to nearly the entire national income of weaker countries. □

In the US at the end of the 1950s the military accounted for nearly 60 percent of gross domestic fixed capital formation. The intention of the governments involved was to maintain their military capability. The unintended consequences of their actions were enormous.

Such huge levels of spending provided jobs for millions of workers who might otherwise be unemployed. Military research accounted for 52 percent of all expenditure on research and development in the US (1962-63) and employed 300,000 qualified scientists in the OECD area. Millions more were involved in the more 'blue

collar' work in the production of arms. When they spent their wages this provided more demand for other industries, which also expanded production. In other words, the huge outlay on arms, pumping demand into the economy, helped ensure full employment.

The arms budget was paid for by taxes. This had the effect of diverting resources that would otherwise go to productive investment and moderated the growth in the cyclical upswing. It helped to avoid a feverish boom with over-accumulation and a crisis of overproduction. The permanent arms economy had the effect of smoothing out the worst of the peaks and troughs of the capitalist cycle and ensured sustained high growth rates.

These benign effects could not have been sustained for more than a few years were it not for another effect of the permanent arms economy. By diverting resources from productive investment to arms the rate at which capital was accumulated was reduced. Capitalists in America, Britain and France saw some of their profits siphoned off by the government to fund arms contracts. They had less to invest in new machinery. This meant that industry became 'capital intensive' less quickly than it would otherwise, given the rate of growth in the economy.

In the long term this process carried its own problems. The costs of the enormous waste represented by arms expenditure began to assume greater significance. The Vietnam War plunged the US — which had been the world's lender — into debt and was only sustained by printing dollars and thereby creating inflation.

This was a reflection of the fact that the major capitalist powers were unequal in military and economic strength and the costs of the arms economy were borne unequally. Japan and Germany, having been defeated in the Second World War, were prohibited from maintaining large armies. Without the burden of large military expenditure their capitalists could devote a large proportion of their surplus value to rebuilding and re-equipping their economies. Economically speaking, they enjoyed the benefits of the permanent arms economy without having to carry the costs.

Soon these economies were undercutting those of the US, Britain and France and threatening their markets. The jolt of the OPEC oil price hikes in 1973 plunged the world into slump for the first time since the 1930s. Since then crisis has never been far away.



The cycle today

The enormous waste of desperately needed resources still goes on today. The Son of Star Wars missile defence system has a budget of around \$8 billion a year; total costs could run to \$200 billion. The US is still spending \$35 billion a year on its nuclear programme. US military spending is greater than all the military spending of the next 13 countries ranked beneath it. Yet the US share of world trade and world manufacturing is substantially less than it was during the Cold War. This is one central reason why the use of military might is so often the policy of choice for the US ruling class.

Can arms expenditure today once more return the advanced world to long-term economic prosperity? This is extremely unlikely for a number of reasons.

For twenty-five years after the Second World War, arms spending had the effect of offsetting the rise in the organic composition of capital and holding up the rate of profit. But the permanent arms economy did not abolish the rise in the organic composition of capital, it only slowed it. Because of this, the rate of profit continued to fall markedly by the end of the 1960s and has remained below the levels of the fifties and sixties.

Of course the response of the bosses is to try to make the workers pay, to lay off and to cut wages. This creates the same problem — goods end up not being bought. Real take home pay for workers in the US has fallen to the levels of the 1960s and workers now work harder and longer. This has pushed up what Marx called the rate of surplus value and while it may have increased the mass of profits available to the capitalists, it has not expanded the purchasing power of the working class. A crisis of overproduction is now, therefore, an ever present possibility.

If the inflated stock markets take a serious dive, those with paper assets and large borrowings will suddenly feel exposed. If, as a result, the middle class takes fright and stop borrowing in the US, consumption will collapse and the bust will begin.

In today's world, the offsetting tendencies are proving less able to work than in the post-war period. Military spending may provide some boost to the US economy but in a greater globalised world, an economic crisis in one part of the system — in Argentina for example — can send shock waves back to the US. Furthermore, state intervention does not necessarily provide any way out. The Japanese state, despite holding back interest rates, increasing public spending, and saving collapsing businesses has not been able to avoid stagnation. Attempts in the US to avoid an economic slump will take far larger commitments of public spending than Bush has currently planned — even in the advent of September 11 — and over time will begin to eat seriously into profitability.

Finally, military spending and the threat and pursuance of war bring far more political repercussions than it does economic benefits. These policies lay bare the brutality of the system which, along with the failure of the system to deliver for thousands of people, can itself trigger massive opposition.

On the brink of nuclear disaster

'Life's normal only because the macabre has become normal. While we wait for rain, for football, for justice, the old generals and eager boy-anchors on TV talk of first strike and second-strike capabilities as though they're discussing a family board game.' So the writer and anti-capitalist Arundhati Roy wrote as Pakistan and India were on the brink of nuclear war. The prospect of over a billion people living under the direct threat of nuclear destruction cast a shadow across the globe. A million troops face each other waiting for the order to fight.



Indian soldiers policing the border with Pakistan

For over half a century tensions over Kashmir have raged between India and Pakistan. The victims are the people of Kashmir, in whose interests both states claim they are acting. Over 70,000 people have been killed in Kashmir since 1990. Over 600,000 Indian troops are deployed in the region and they have killed at least 60,000 Kashmiris in the areas under their control. India's special task force carries out bloody 'counterinsurgency' operations in an effort to suppress Kashmir's movement for independence. Amnesty International found: 'The brutality of torture in Jammu and Kashmir defies belief. It has left people mutilated and disabled for life. The severity of torture meted out by the Indian security forces in Jammu and Kashmir is the main reason for the appalling numbers of deaths in custody'.

Pakistan's rulers have exploited the repression suffered by the Kashmiri people. They have funded, armed and trained Islamic groups to distort Kashmiris' genuine demands for independence, seeking to bring Kashmir into the Pakistani state. Replacing an Indian army of occupation with a Pakistani one is no liberation.

Neither India nor Pakistan can be supported. Some 500 million people in India and Pakistan survive on less than \$1 a day. Yet the rulers of both countries have armed themselves to the hilt. Between 1993 and 2000 the two countries' combined arms purchases were worth £13 billion.

The India-Pakistan conflict is linked with the global rivalries between the Great Powers. India took a neutral stance during the Cold War in theory; in practice they developed links with the Soviet Bloc. Pakistan aligned itself to China, the only regional power that matched India's military strength. After China joined the US's side in the Cold War at the start of the 1970s, US policy 'tilted', as Secretary of State Henry Kissinger put it, towards Pakistan. The US-Pakistan alliance became even stronger after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979. The military regime of General Zia ul-Haq became the main conduit through which the CIA channelled aid to the Mujahideen guerrillas fighting the Russian occupying forces.

Once the Cold War was over Pakistan became much less important to the US. The administration of Bill Clinton set out to woo India, a major 'emerging market'. Pakistan, as the weaker of the rival states, was more vulnerable to the sanctions the US imposed on both countries after they tested nuclear weapons in May 1998.

After 11 September Pakistan's military dictator, Pervez Musharraf, had no choice but to back the US war in Afghanistan. This was a tough decision, given the role the ISI had played in building up the Taliban. Musharraf was rewarded with generous US aid, but the outcome of the war was still a blow to Pakistan's interests in Afghanistan. The victorious Northern Alliance is backed by India, Russia and Iran - Pakistan's regional rivals.

The Indian government, headed by the anti-Muslim BJP, felt threatened by the special attention Pakistan was receiving from the US in its attempts to convince Musharraf to join its coalition. American intervention thus gave both countries' rulers strong reasons for asserting themselves. The fighting in Kashmir between Indian forces and Islamist guerrillas provided Indian Prime minister AB Vajpayee with an opportunity. The guerrillas were trained by the Taliban and backed by the Pakistani army and so he portrayed India as the injured party, engaged in the same 'war on terror' as the Bush administration. At the same time BJP militants in the state of Gujarat carried out a horrific pogrom against Muslims which left over 1,000 dead.

The repression of Kashmir by the Indian state is vile and must be opposed, but there would not be greater peace, freedom or security if Kashmir were to join Pakistan. Kashmiris must be given the right to genuine self-determination, including the choice of independence, with guaranteed rights for Buddhists and Hindus. There is a need to build unity of the poor and exploited throughout the region. As one Kashmiri group put it in the 1970s: 'We will fight for our right to self determination... But what is the point of fighting for my own self determination, if I do not also fight the landlords and the exploiters?' The result of the partition of the region is a division of people on the grounds of religion and nationality. The alternative is undermining these divisions by building unity through class struggle. In the region, which has a long tradition of a secular left, that means recreating a left that can tackle communalism and war. Here the real threat of mass destruction as a product of Bush's war on the world should be a spur to building a movement against this mad and dangerous system.

by Simon Basketter

REVIEWS - ARTS

Shostakovich: Bitter sweet Symphonies



Shostakovich

Shostakovich was one of the greatest composers of the twentieth century, but he is also the modern composer about whom the greatest confusion exists. Was he working as a supporter of Soviet Russia, praising the system that he lived under or did his music contain a critique of Stalinism? For many composers, their political ideas are irrelevant to an assessment of their music. In the case of Shostakovich it is not possible to skirt around the question. He wrote music for the times that he lived in, music that was laden with political meaning.

At one end of the spectrum are views like those of J. Machlis, who believed that Shostakovich was a spokesperson for the 'USSR's stern but parental solicitude for Soviet artists'. At the other end of the scale is a 1990 biography by Ian MacDonald. In his book MacDonald argued that Lenin's regime was one of 'social extermination' and that the revolution created a cultural atmosphere 'bordering on sadism and pornography'. Shostakovich, argues MacDonald, was striving against this in the name of freedom and western values.

Shostakovich was eleven when the Russian Revolution erupted - his family was sympathetic to the Bolsheviks (his father was an engineer) and took him to see the arrival of Lenin at the Finland Station. But, according to the controversial 'Testimony' smuggled out of Russia by Volkov, this great historical moment was lost on the composer, who was much more deeply shaken by the sight of a Cossack killing a boy with a sabre.

Although appearing as shy and distant, Shostakovich was as tough as the times demanded. In 1919, during the terrible year of fever, famine and cold, he worked for a while banging out piano accompaniments to films, while at the same time enrolling to learn composition in the Petrograd Conservatory. Fuel was so scarce that the school could barely keep a little fire alive, and only the student whose turn it was next on the piano was allowed to warm their hands.

During the 1920s the isolation of the Russian Revolution led to a demoralisation in the population, and at the same time, a new generation of careerists in the Russian Communist Party were rallied by Stalin to a take-over of society. Their power became apparent in 1928 with the launch of the first Five Year Plan, which was also an attack on the living standards of workers and peasants.

The coming to power of a Stalinist bureaucracy was as devastating to culture as it was to basic rights. The new regime wanted works that legitimised their power. Many artists obliged. Shostakovich remembers with bitterness how some of the great names of his day tried to ingratiate themselves with the new authorities. 'There were many Russian creative artists who were infatuated by the person of our leader', he said to Volkov, 'who rushed to create works of praise for him. Besides Mayakovsky, I could mention Eisenstein and his Ivan the Terrible, with music by Prokofiev.'

When young and little known Shostakovich was introduced to Mayakovsky,

the great poet disdainfully only offered the composer two fingers to touch. Shostakovich was no fool and offered him just one in return. The poet was stunned at the audacity of this 'nobody' asserting himself.

Shostakovich's assertiveness nearly cost him his life. As the USSR crammed a hundred years of industrial development into just ten years, there was absolutely no room for dissent. In every walk of life, those who balked at the demands of the regime were tortured, executed or deported to labour camps.

In 1934 Shostakovich wrote the opera *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*. This is an opera which seems to be concerned with the relationships between a family and their servants, but suddenly veers off into a tale of the misery at the hands of the police. The portrayal of the chief of police as venal, sadistic and corrupt was not lost on the authorities. On January 28th, 1936, Pravda came out with an attack on Shostakovich entitled 'Muddle Instead of Music'. The opera was taken offstage; his friends abandoned him, running for cover. A second editorial in Pravda

used the ominous phrase 'this could end very badly' and labelled the composer an 'enemy of the people'. The Communist Party organised special meetings throughout the country to explain to its members the faults of a music of 'quacks, grunts and growls'.

Aesthetically the period of modernism within the arts that had flourished in the 1920's was well and truly over. Although the soviet regime found Shostakovich to be too experimental, in fact by contemporary European standards, he had not been particularly radical since his second (1927) and third (1929) symphonies. The composer's great crime was to have planted a subversive idea into his work.

For Shostakovich the next two years were the low point of his life. It was not just that he lived with the constant possibility of execution - this was the era when the executions following the great show trials were just the tip of the iceberg - but he was demoralised by how little resistance there was to Stalin. For a while, the only way out seemed to be suicide.

an idea which Shostakovich considered 'with relish' before rejecting it.

'I came out of the crisis stronger than before,' he said, according to the smuggled notes, 'more confident of my own strength. The hostile forces did not seem so omnipotent.'

The crisis of 1936 was a pivotal moment in Shostakovich's life and career. Did he capitulate to Stalinism or did he submerge his opposition deeper, and more abstractly, in his music? The debate hangs on an assessment of his Fifth Symphony.

After a year of isolation Shostakovich returned to public life with his Fifth Symphony, which was labelled by a reviewer for Pravda as 'a soviet artists reply to just criticism'. The new symphony was put under close scrutiny by the authorities, going so far as to compare what percentage of the music was in a minor key and what percentage was in a major key. The symphony ends with a grand, apparently celebratory, finale. This satisfied the authorities in 1937.

Is this great symphony a praise poem to Stalinism? Unlike an opera, there is no real test of the programmatic intention of an abstract piece of music. This was fortunate for Shostakovich, because there are clear emotional currents running through the music, most of which are clearly expressing terrible sorrow. When you listen to the finale, it does seem that it is forced, like a puppet marching proudly with a fixed smile on its face. It is no wonder that many audiences were in tears.

A similar argument exists over the Seventh Symphony (1941). The *Leningrad* became Shostakovich's most popular Symphony. It was finished when Leningrad was under siege, and when the composer was, for a while, a voluntary fire fighter. Throughout the music, growing insistently and ominously is a theme which was generally considered to be representative of Hitler. The symphony was therefore happily promoted by the Stalinist authorities and was used across the world as an example of the spirit of Soviet resistance to the Nazis. But Shostakovich later made a crucial point, that the symphony had been planned before

the Nazi invasion, as he explained to Volkov, 'I was thinking of other enemies of humanity when I composed the theme'.

Despite the success of the Seventh Symphony, Shostakovich fell from favour again, largely due to his anti-climatic Ninth Symphony, which failed to be the expected rousing celebration of Stalin's war time achievements. Again a sinister menace is present behind superficially cheerful melodies.

With the death of Stalin in 1953 and a certain amount of liberalisation following Khrushchev's famous 1956 speech, Shostakovich could risk more daring compositions. His Thirteenth Symphony (1962), for example, was ostensibly about the Nazi massacre of Jews, but since Stalin's anti-Semitic policies were being exposed, it was widely understood to be a metaphor for the 1930s and '40s in Russia.

Shostakovich never became an open opponent of the system, much to the chagrin of younger composers and musicians who felt from his music that he had the soul of a rebel. But the traumatic experience of having barely survived the purges had deeply marked the composer. In later life he moved away from programmatic works, to introspective, bleak studies. He died in 1975.

Because of the necessity of concealment, the legacy of the composer has been fought over as either being for or against the Soviet system. But it is too constricting to try to place Shostakovich on such a two-dimensional political scale. Rather, it is more appropriate to imagine the young man, genuinely enthusiastic in Russia's great revolutionary years despite all the hardships. A man shocked and demoralised by the rise of Stalin and the lack of principles among those around him. Facing exile or execution, the composer fought back in the only way he could, deceiving the cultural censors and retaining a heart-aching core to his music that was not patriotic to Soviet Russia.

by Conor Kostick
(Chairperson of the Irish Writers Union and a columnist for the *Journal of Music in Ireland*.)

The long road to compromise



Sinn Fein: A Hundred Turbulent Years
Brian Feeney
O'Brien Press, 2002
stg £19.99/£28

Newspaper columnist, history lecturer and ex-SDLP member of Belfast city council, Brian Feeney is well placed to tell the tale of Sinn Fein's long and winding road from its foundation as a tiny sect advocating a 'dual monarchy' across Britain and Ireland to a major party serving in government in the North and disappointed at failing to make it into government with Fianna Fail in May's general election in the South.

The story has a regular rhythm. Collins, deValera, MacBride, MacGiolla, Adams — each in turn veered off the rocky road of armed struggle to take the primrose path of politics.

Feeney recounts the story sympathetically and well. This

is an easy read. The main problem socialists will have with the presentation might, perversely, be seen as one of the book's strengths. Feeney is a strong advocate of the communal model of Northern Ireland politics.

The idea of seeking to realign conflict along the axis of class strikes him as plain daft — as does any notion of class politics as an element in Sinn Fein's ideology. He takes the communal nature of the party for granted — as Sinn Fein leaders themselves are wont to do, except when they are within earshot of socialists with votes.

About half the 400-plus pages covers the period between Arthur Griffith's foundation of Sinn Fein in 1905 and the emergence of the Northern civil rights movement in the mid-1960s. Previous standard accounts of Republicanism in this phase — Bowyer Bell, Tim Pat Coogan, and M. L. R. Smith — have focused on the IRA and not on Sinn Fein. Feeney, putting the party rather than the army in the foreground, offers a perspective in which the politics which have brought Sinn Fein to its present position — as opposed to the course of battle, changing attitudes to violence or the clandestine manoeuvring of the leadership — can be seen in middling-clear definition.

Sinn Fein commonly presents itself as a constant presence in modern Irish history, keeping the Republican faith as others fell away. In fact, at its inception Sinn Fein was not Republican at all. It was only between 1917 and 1921 that it enjoyed the status of a national movement. It wasn't until

after World War Two that the IRA acquired Sinn Fein as a vacant property for use as its political wing. From then until the 1980s, when a new Northern leadership ousted Ruairi O'Bradaigh and his co-thinkers, Sinn Fein had a flimsy autonomous existence, with no meaningful internal life.

The party, which bourgeois commentators are now in awe of, sharing power with Unionists at Stormont and still looking forward to balance-of-power status at Leinster House, is essentially a product not of a century's experience but of modern times, specifically of modern times in the North.

Even after the breakthrough into respectability in the South (a young graduate might these days join Sinn Fein for career reasons) the leadership is drawn largely from North of the border — a telling circumstance in a decidedly top-down organisation. Thus, the party can be seen as an outgrowth from a Northern nationalism, which had been shaped over the years by an experience significantly different from that of nationalist Ireland as a whole.

Sinn Feiners have until very recently traced their claim to recognition as a 'national movement' to the general election of December 1918 which saw the party devastate John Redmond's Home Rulers.

Feeney spotlights the fact that in only two of 37 head-to-head contests between Redmondites and Sinn Feiners in that election did the Redmondites triumph. One was John Redmond's old seat in Waterford, the other was West Belfast, where Joe Devlin trounced deValera. The first sentence spoken by Gerry Adams when he addressed a joyous crowd on the Falls Road after Sinn Fein's breakthrough victory in the 1983 Westminster election was: 'Even deValera couldn't win the Falls!' And Adams will have well understood the significance.

West Belfast is commonly referred to as 'traditionally Republican'. But it is not.

What was historically significant about 1983 was that Adams was the first Republican ever elected in the area. Similarly, Mickey Montgomery of the Officials, in 1974, was the first Republican ever elected for the Bogside-Creggan area of Derry.

This apparent upsurge of Republicanism in the North in the early 1970s didn't represent an old repressed tradition suddenly gushing out again through the cracks caused by the seismic impact of civil rights. More accurately, the Republican movement provided an organisational framework and a channel for expression of the erupting anger of the Catholic working class and a ready-made ideology, which endowed it with historical grandeur. But it was the living experience of the individuals involved and not the grandeur of the ideology of the movement that determined the political trajectory.

Feeney's most useful resource in telling the story is the direct evidence of some of the key players. He quotes copiously from the published pronouncements of Adams and Martin McGuinness and, more tellingly, has obviously had extensive, frank cooperation from Jim Gibney, Tom Hartley, Patricia Davidson and Danny Morrison. What emerges is confirmation of the twinkling remark of one of the most renowned leaders of the armed struggle in the 1980s that, 'Those fellows from Belfast were never really Republicans. They were only fighting for their streets'.

Fighting for your street is not necessarily an ignoble enterprise. In some circumstances it is no more than a neighbourly duty. But the experience doesn't automatically generate commitment to a particular set of political ideas. There was nothing preordained about the street experience of the late 1960s and early '70s finding its expression in Republicanism and there was no fundamental wrench involved in the subsequent ditching of traditional Republican ideas, a process which began almost as soon as

REVIEWS - BOOKS



some of the participants found pause to draw breath.

At the heart of Republican ideology is a belief not in armed struggle but in the legitimacy of the authority of the actually-existing Republic proclaimed in 1916 and endorsed in December 1918: the imperative to bear arms flows automatically from this. The project on which Gibney, Hartley etc. embarked in the mid-seventies, however more or less consciously, was to hollow out this ideology from the movement they had inherited. Abandonment of armed struggle followed naturally. In practice, over time, this involved relegating the IRA, custodian of the idea of the Republic, to ancillary status. It meant, too, that the political apparatus that was put under construction had no defining ideological core. Pragmatism was the order of the day.

The point of departure for political action was not necessarily to overthrow the constitutional order but, by whatever means practicable and necessary, to advance the position of the Nationalist community. Recruiting the most powerful allies available for this project, of whatever ideological background — Fianna Fail, corporate America, the Catholic hierarchy — made sense. Inevitably in these circumstances, Sinn Fein turned off the road to the Republic by veering to the Right.

Sinn Fein's lingering association with the IRA apart, no establishment interest now regards the party as standing for anything dangerous to their fundamental interests or

Adams angered many when he attended the World Economic Forum in New York

locates it beyond the pale of political acceptability. Sinn Fein are still portrayed by Unionists and Unionist supporters in the media as a dangerous outfit, not to be trusted with a share of political power, but Sinn Feiners are frequently content enough to be depicted in this light. In truth, the party is well on the way to completion of a journey from an unrespectable past in unconstitutional nationalism to a bright future in populist, bourgeois politics.

Feeney sees this pattern of development as right and proper. His admiration for the Sinn Fein leadership is palpable. It is not necessary to agree with this estimation to appreciate the elegant way he has laid out a mass of fact, quote, well-chosen reminiscence and deft observation in a work, which, among its other qualities, includes the most level-headed account of the Provos in the peace process yet to emerge.

In a way, the admiration in which Feeney, an erudite centre-ground Nationalist, holds Adams and his associates provides its own commentary on what Sinn Fein — notwithstanding the opportunist blather with which the party appeals to the marginalised in the South — really stands for.

by Eamonn McCann

Imperialism: the greater of two evils

The Clash Of
Fundamentalisms
- Tariq Ali
Verso £15stg/£21

Much of the current writing on the events of September 11, on the war in Afghanistan and on future actions against the 'axis of evil' has had one central theme: the clash of the pluralist, tolerant West, and the monolithic, fundamentalist Islamic world. The value-laden terms are no accident; they serve as an attempt to justify the actions of the western alliance against those countries deemed a threat to their interests.

Such a description of the conflict that led to September 11th is not new; Ali quotes Samuel P Huntington who wrote a book entitled *The Clash of Civilizations* claiming that 'the West represented human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets'. Presumably the heathens of the Arab world are considered to be against all the above — therefore the 'axis' must be smashed. This is essentially a slightly more sophisticated version of the 'white man's burden' referred to by Rudyard Kipling at the turn of the twentieth century.

Ali dismantles this position in admirable style. Throughout the book he attacks the characterisation of both sides in the conflict; America and the West is not some honest broker, free of guilt, and Islam is not a simple reactionary monolithic block.

One of the many strengths of the book is that it illustrates how Islamic ideas developed, changed and took hold in periods of its history. The result is an engaging read, one which shows that Islam had a rich, textured past, which involved mixing with other religious tendencies, rather than intolerance. This undermines the arguments of the Christian Fundamentalists (George Bush and Tony Blair take a bow) who would like to portray Islam as a reactionary dogma and also undermines the arguments of the Islamists

who would look back to a 'golden age' of 'pure Islam'.

In the second part of the book Ali looks at the establishment of the Arabic states and teases out the reasons behind the growth of militant Islam. The reasons are made clear by the title '100 years of servitude'. The growth of this militant Islam is situated in the experience of oppression and imperialism. The secular left had an opportunity to shape events in the fight against this oppression, but when they failed this led to the growth of the Islamists. Understanding that Islamism emerged from a struggle against oppression when more progressive forces failed to offer an alternative allows Ali to both criticise Islamism and oppose the oppression that those who look to it suffer.

Of particular relevance is the chapter on India, Pakistan and Kashmir given the current conflict. Ali discusses the relationship between India, Pakistan and Kashmir. In his history of the region, he makes quite clear that Kashmir, irrespective of being 90 percent Muslim, did not necessarily see Pakistan as its natural home. It vacillated following the partition of India and Pakistan, and following an invasion by Pakistani forces joined with India. He notes with some irony: 'Pakistan is [now] led by a secular General and India by a fundamentalist Hindu' — a neat reversal from the way the states were set up originally — although this holds little hope of peace of the people of the region. That Kashmir continues to be a pawn between the countries is a tragedy of history — with potentially dire consequences.

At all times the involvement of Western powers is highlighted. For Ali, the West, and the United States in particular, is the 'mother of all fundamentalisms'. In the Section entitled 'A short course history of US imperialism' Ali argues this premise eloquently. I've never come across a better description of the emergence of the US as an imperial power and its consolidation as leader of 'the empire'. We are taken from the destruction of the Native Americans through to the role of the Military Complex in the US today. Ali scores a point when describing the US as fundamentalists themselves, their dedication to neo-liberalism

and global domination a far more devastating force than the 'axis of evil' so beloved of George Bush and newspaper columnists in the West. In the struggle between the West and the new axis of evil there is no fence-sitting, Ali states bluntly 'The fundamentalism of the empire has no equal' — it has far more blood on its hands than Bin Laden.

In 'September Surprise', describing the events of September 11, Ali quotes Chalmers Johnson, an American historian, author of *Blowback*: 'blowback is shorthand for saying that a nation reaps what it sows... given its wealth and power, the US will be a prime recipient in the future of all the more expectable forms of blowback including terrorist attacks'.

This was prophetic, written as it was a year before the events of September 11. In the section on Iraq, a similarly incisive comment is made concerning the Gulf War and the maintenance of the UN sanctions: 'the combination of anger and despair will lead to more and more young people in the Arab world and elsewhere feeling that the only response to state terror is individual terror'.

While understanding that the main enemy in the world is the fundamentalism of the West there is no pulling of punches when it comes to the Arabic states and their rulers. In 'Letter to a Young Muslim', he demolishes the idea that Bin Laden or Mullah Omar (leader of the Taliban) offer any liberation to Muslims and condemns the Islamic states that they would usher in. Again the criticisms hit the mark, describing Islamic leaders he states, 'Exploiters and manipulators have always used religion self righteously to further their own political ends'. It struck me that this was as applicable to George Bush (God bless America) as to Bin Laden.

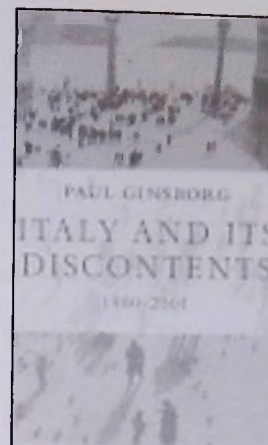
In Ali's book, we have a wide-ranging history of Islam, of the West's malign influence, of the corruption of Islamic states, and of the destruction of Islamism. We are left in no doubt that the 'secular' west should be opposed along with its' imperialist fundamentalism.

by Colm O'Riain

Italy — the roots of dissent

Italy and its Discontents

Paul Ginsborg
Allen Lane, Penguin
Press, 2002
£25stg/€35



Italy And Its Discontents is a follow on from Paul Ginsborg's informative study, *A History of Contemporary Italy*, a social and political history of the country from the end of the Second World War until the late 1980s.

In the run-up to the 1980s Italy was a country changing, and not for the better. The 1960s and 1970s saw an upsurge in working class militancy followed by defeats. This led increasingly down a path of desperate individual 'terrorist' action as the mass movement retreated. By the mid 1970s the left controlled almost every city in Italy, but a turning point had been reached. The Communist Party of Italy (PCI), to which the best sections of the organised working class would have looked, decided to go down the road of the 'historic compromise'. It preferred to build alliances with reactionary elements of the right wing instead of building a genuine left alternative.

Italy was a late entrant into the G7 group of industrialised countries. Throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s, Italy had a trade deficit and was a net importer of food. However, from the mid-1970s to 1990 the Gross Domestic Product increased by 50 percent, up 6 percent on the EC average. Towards the end of this period Italy took its place on the world stage as the fifth largest capitalist economy in the world, overtaking Britain for that position.

Across the globe, the 1980s marked the beginning of the end of class militancy. Italy was no exception. This period marked the defeat of the workers of the huge FIAT workplaces in Northern Italy. At this time the present Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi set about building a huge media empire, with little obstacles presented to his progress by very business friendly legislation. By the end of the decade he amassed 42 percent of the Italian mass media as well as football team AC Milan.

Ginsborg analyses the composition of Italian industry. The industrialised North revolved very much around expanded family-owned businesses that were 'clustered' in areas of similar production. He also uses figures to illustrate the north-south divide in terms of these family-run businesses, showing that in 1991 there were 238 of these firms employing 1.7 million workers in the North compared with just 12 firms in the south of the country.

Following the Second World War, Ginsborg describes a process of social mobility from 'landless labourer or impoverished peasant to urban worker or artisan or shopkeeper; later on, from urban blue-collar to white-collar employment, or to small business'. This feeling of ever onwards and upwards probably peaked in the mid '80s and from the '90s 'the arteries of Italian mobility were beginning to narrow'. The image of the income dis-

tribution in this decade was not so much diamond-shaped, with the majority in the middle, but was in reality more like a 'pear but with a stalk ten times the pear itself'.

Ginsborg examines many other changes in Italian society, including the changing role of gender in society. In detailing the growth of women in the workplace he shows that it rose from 22 per cent in 1961 to 30 percent in 1991. For many women the choice to enter the workforce was pitted against the needs within the family, be it minding children or caring for an ageing parent.

By the 1980s the upper class had recovered from the threat to its wealth and privilege in the 1960s and 1970s presented by working class militancy and was helped along by political supporters like Christian Democrat Giulio Andreotti, a DeValera of Italian politics, who had been five times prime minister by the beginning of the 1980s.

This book is a mine of information with many interesting sections, one covering Italian television, charting the different political parties' attempts to exert control over different state channels. Other interesting points include the fact that in 1994 nearly five million volunteers were helping out in hospitals, teaching Italian to illiterate people or immigrants.

Italy And Its Discontents, while extremely well researched (indicated by the 130 pages of notes and bibliography), has serious failings. This is no history from below and the author's section on class carries the same weight as the other numerous aspects of Italian life he deals with. The political wheeling and dealing of the '80s are explained from a purely party political leader point of view, without examining the broader class issues. One of the most glaring examples of this is in his explanation of the fall of the first Berlusconi government on 22 November '94. The largest trade union demonstration in the history of the Republic against government cutbacks, which toppled the Berlusconi regime, is relegated to one line.

The difficulty with Ginsborg's argument is that his top-down view of society leads him to see the potential for change as coming from governments that think of ways to further the creation of a 'democratic culture within families'. If they succeed, he contends, then the state can become 'a state within' rather than 'a state without'. In other words it will not be a state exterior to families, but will act with their active consent. If there is a message in this book it is that he is trying to find a reformist bridge between the family and the state, ignoring the central role workers can and must play in changing their own lives and society itself.

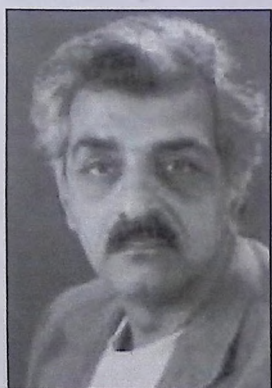
While the book provides many illuminating and invaluable facts all in one volume, it lacks a consistent theory to pull it all together to really understand the recent changes undergone in Italy. Ginsborg's attitude is slightly out-of-date considering the anti-G8 demonstrations last year and, notwithstanding the fact that the book was published beforehand, no mention is given at all to the growing anti-capitalist mood experienced for several years previously.

Ginsborg is more confident when he is taking on historical matters. He offers a good analysis of the Mafia. He examines how it has 'grown side by side with the development of capitalism' and become embodied in society due to collusion 'with more than one element of the state itself'.

Also worth reading is the piece on P2 (Propaganda 2), the shadowy Masonic lodge implicated in the 1980 Bologna bombing that killed over 80 people. While the first book ended with scant information on it, the latest volume details how members of the group included generals, judges, deputies, journalists and senior politicians. The conspiracy went right to the top — a lesson for those looking at the Italy of today.

by Donacha
MacRaghnaill

Tariq Ali



Wanted: something to believe in

The Romanian-born dramatist Ionesco wrote a play called *'Six Characters in Search of an Author'*, which could easily have been about Fine Gael under new leader Enda Kenny.

Ionesco was, of course, one of the leading practitioners of the Theatre of the Absurd, so his relevance to the fortunes of Fine Gael is fairly obvious. Were he still around (he died, too soon, in 1994) he might have paid a direct tribute to the party of the button-down blueshirts with a new work entitled *'Thirty-One Characters in Search of Something to Believe In'*.

There has been a rare unanimity among commentators. Kenny's first priority after the disastrous election in which FG dropped 23 seats must be to find something for the remaining deputies to believe in. The Irish Times commentator Drapier declared that of the 'huge raft of problems' confronting the Mayo man, 'The first is - What does Fine Gael stand for?'

'Various people have tried to answer this question,' Drapier went on, 'from Gay Mitchell's Christian Democrats to others who talk in terms of left-of-centre Social Democrats, or others still who want the party to move to the "Right".'

And which is the correct answer? — 'Drapier does not know'.

The *Independent's* Chris Glennon mused that, 'Kenny's way forward would be easier if there was any clear sense of what Fine Gael's values are'. And what would Glennon's own sense of these Fine Gael values be? 'This is an impossible question to answer.' A commentator on *The Last Word* put it succinctly: 'Whatever it is Fine Gael stands for, they must begin to express it.'

So much for the experts.

It will strike readers of Resistance that this is a vice-versa way to look at the relationship between party and political beliefs.

Many will have assumed that political parties consisted of people who had come together because they had some belief, or set of beliefs, in common. Not a bit of it, apparently.

With Fine Gael, people first join the party, then get elected (or not), and finally get around to discussing the reason the party exists.

Kenny is himself an open-minded sort of chap and told RTE that he intended to 'consult widely with my colleagues', before deciding what the party believes in. What's more, he 'wouldn't rule anything out'. So the nation-alisation of industry with workers' control of the means of production, distribution and exchange remains an option then?

One way for Kenny to proceed would be to ask each of his 30 deputies to write down three things they believe in and then to tabulate, say, the top five choices and adopt them. These could form the party's new five-point programme. A risky enterprise, given the possibility of Padre Pio's power of bi-location emerging as front-runner. Indeed, the magic hill of Clooney upon which water runs up, or the need to double the subsidy on goats could form points two and three of their brand new manifesto. But seriously, some mechanism must be found for discovering 'The Secret Beliefs of Fine Gael'.

There is a serious point buried away in all this (which is more than we can say about Fine Gael). The main reason that Fine Gael can't think of anything to believe in is that neither can Fianna Fail. Nor, for that matter, can the Progressive Democrats. And although there may be a scattering of believers in old social democratic ideas left in the Labour Party, they count for nothing when it comes to framing electoral programmes or deciding on strategy. Labour's serenade to the electorate is no longer *The Red Flag* (if it ever was) but any way you want, you got it.

In other words, Fine Gael's difficulty is not that it is idea-impo- verished but that mainstream politics is devoid of ideas. Which, in turn, is another way of saying that each of the mainstream parties



Enda Kenny

is content to go with the flow of ideas and events in the wider capitalist world. In this situation, Fine Gael finds it virtually impossible to fulfill its allotted role of charting an alternative course for government. The Tories across the water find themselves in a similar if not exactly identical dilemma.

The point is underlined by the fact that, in order to differentiate itself from the FF-led government, Fine Gael is now widely advised not to sharpen its policies but to polish its image. On his Radio One programme, Vincent Browne suggested that Kenny's 'most positive asset' was that 'he seems nice' — in contrast to Noonan who, Browne reckoned, may or may not have *been* nice, but who never managed to *seem* nice.

Five panelists on *Questions and Answers*, including a defeated FG leadership candidate and a new FF minister, were unanimous that Kenny's 'niceness' and 'friendliness' were his strongest suits.

Drapier counseled Fine Gaelers not to despair. The Irish people would accept FG as 'a viable and attractive alternative government' if it succeeds in presenting itself as 'a party that is well-led, professionally organised, saying real things about real issues.'

As opposed, presumably, to saying unreal things about unreal issues. That tosh like this can be offered as serious analysis in a serious newspaper speaks eloquently of the current ideological bankruptcy of bourgeois politics.

Against this background, it's hard to envisage Kenny conjuring a revival in Fine Gael fortunes. Party members may one day look back nostalgically on the Noonan era. They could maybe mount another of Ionesco's plays in his honour — *The Bald Prima Donna*, perhaps?